ABORIGINAL WORLD VIEWS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION OF ABORIGINAL ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal world views and determine their implications for the education of Aboriginal adults. Aboriginal world views are the fundamental assumptions or deep structures which form the basis of Aboriginal cultures. World views are mediated and expressed through language, dance, art, and religion. In this research I chose to gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal world views by interviewing the Aboriginal staff and students of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre.

I began the fieldwork for this ethnographic study in June of 1992 by interviewing the staff and students of Project Refocus, by taking part in two classes with the students of the Start Program, and by entering into conversations with individual staff members from a variety of programs. Four of the participants in these interviews became key respondents who acted as editors of my written work and guides for my ongoing investigation. I built upon the knowledge gained in our conversations by reading the literature pertaining to Aboriginal world views. This knowledge was further supplemented by my participation in such Aboriginal ceremonies as the sweatlodge and the pipe ceremony. Personal narrative is entwined with academic

discourse throughout the thesis in order to reflect the manner in which I gained a greater understanding of Aboriginal world views.

Examination of the interview transcripts revealed two themes common to the world views of the Aboriginal participants. The first theme, harmonious relationships, demonstrates the value these participants place on living in harmony with the other human and non-human entities who inhabit the world. Recognizing that all entities are important to the continuation of life, the participants in this research work to enhance and preserve their relationships with their human and non-human cousins. The second theme, spirituality, refers to many participants' belief that all aspects of the natural world possess spiritual characteristics. The spiritual dimensions of nature link human and non-human together in kinship, and lead to greater knowledge and understanding.

Having examined the two themes of harmonious relationships and spirituality, I go on to discuss their implications for the education of Aboriginal adults. Foremost among these is that knowledge has a social purpose; it is not acquired for personal gain but is to be used for the benefit of the human and non-human community. Second, Aboriginal peoples consider that the relationship between educator and learner lies at the heart of the educative

process in contrast to Euro-Canadian education which stresses the transmission of skills and knowledge. Third, education does not interrupt the harmonious interrelationships found in nature. Finally, approaches to the education of Aboriginal adults should incorporate their spiritual understandings, for their knowledge and wisdom are spiritually inspired.

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I also wish to thank Dr. Howard Woodhouse, my thesis supervisor, who provided advice, feedback, and ongoing support for this endeavour. He encouraged me to think deeply and critically about my research, introduced me to new ways of interpreting the world, and helped me to express complex thoughts clearly and concisely. I will always be grateful for his ready ear on the other end of the telephone and for his dedication to this research during his sabbatical.

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Thanks are also due to the staff of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre and the students of Intake 10 of Project Refocus. I wish to give my sincere thanks to the key participants in this research who continually challenged me to expand my understanding of Aboriginal world views. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Prince George Native Friendship Centre who, as my employer, gave me the time to complete and defend this thesis.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Justin Mattess of Tl'azt'en Nations who died tragically in August, 1992. He was a good friend when I really needed one. I mourn his passing.

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are connected to the land by generations of their ancestors who have inhabited it. Many Aboriginal people continue to gather food at the same locations where their forebears hunted, trapped, and fished. Frequently, those who live in remote communities still identify themselves by means of their relationship with the plants and animals found in the area (Ross, 1992). For example, the masks and costumes used for dancing by the Kwakiutl people of the Pacific Northwest embody this relationship, since the natural materials used to construct such masks connect Kwakiutl dancers physically and spiritually to the plants, birds, and sea creatures who live in the area (Tafoya, 1989). Attuned to the nuances of their environment, the Kwakiutl are partners in the processes of nature. Similar views of their relationship with nature are shared by such Aboriginal peoples as the Sioux (Brown, 1953 & 1989), the Ojibwa (Ross, 1992), and the Cree (Sanderson, 1992). All these groups

consider their relationship with nature the foundation of their identity.

The knowledge, languages, and cultures of these Aboriginal peoples are thereby rooted in their relationship with the land. At the same time, the expropriation of territory by Euro-Canadians continues to displace many Aboriginal peoples from the land of their ancestors. Aboriginal peoples coexist with Euro-Canadians and have typically been forced to adapt themselves to their ways of life. They have adopted much of Euro-Canadian knowledge and technology while trying to retain the languages and cultures of their ancestors. Many Aboriginal peoples strive for a balance between the knowledge, beliefs, and ways of life of Euro-Canadians with those developed by their ancestors. Consequently, they value an approach to education which both strengthens Aboriginal languages and cultures and bridges Aboriginal and Western knowledge (Johnson, 1992; Colorado, 1988; Omani, 1992).

Approaches such as these recognize that there is a fundamental difference in the way Aboriginal and Western cultures conceive of reality and create knowledge. In order to recognize the value of Aboriginal knowledge, several authors (Colorado, 1988; Omani, 1992; Johnson, 1992) suggest that research

methodologies acceptable to both Aboriginal and Western scientists be created. The intent of these research methodologies is to synthesize the different perspectives gleaned from both Western and Aboriginal cultures, thereby enhancing the understanding each group has of the other.

The recent history of Aboriginal education demonstrates a commitment toward synthesizing Aboriginal and Western knowledge. The 1972 policy paper, Indian Control of Indian Education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972), advocates Aboriginal control of education and recognizes its importance "as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 3). On this basis, Aboriginal peoples could enhance the necessary knowledge and skills for self-government. Education for self-government is not limited to the training of Aboriginal persons in skills such as accounting or mechanical repair; it also enables them to develop land use strategies, political structures, or justice systems to be employed in their communities. Indian Control of Indian Education also notes that education can "develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture"

(National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 3). For example, many Aboriginal peoples value maintaining harmonious relationships with nature. Education which promotes harmony with nature enables them to develop land use strategies which integrate the needs of human beings and those of the land. Aboriginal timber companies could train their employees to employ logging and reforestation practices less damaging to wildlife habitat and more likely to promote the future growth of a wide variety of plant and tree species.

A number of educational programs have been developed for adults which reflect the attitudes, values, and beliefs of Aboriginal communities. In cooperation with Cree elders, Sanderson (1992) describes the Cree way of life for Aboriginal students in the Department of Indian Social Work at Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. At Little Big Horn College in Montana, an educational institution controlled and operated by Aboriginal people, Crow elders gather in a circle with their students and relate the history, religion, and stories of their people (Pease-Windy Boy, 1990). Furthermore, non-Aboriginal adult educators are entering into partnerships with Aboriginal communities to develop new approaches to the education of Aboriginal adults. There is a growing realization

among these educators of the need to gain more knowledge about Aboriginal world views.

While Aboriginal cultures vary, their world views share a number of common features. They are inspired by the close association Aboriginal peoples have with nature; many try to live harmoniously with its processes (Sanderson, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Colorado, 1988). World views, comprise the fundamental assumptions, deep structures, or presuppositions of culture, which may well be recognised at a preconscious level and appreciated intuitively as the basis for the various beliefs, practices, values, and knowledge shared by members of that culture (Porter & Samovar, 1988; Oliver & Gershman, 1989; Feleppa, 1988). World views can also be understood through a process of deliberate reflection in which the assumptions underlying a culture's beliefs, practices, and values are examined, for a world view is the substructure that binds the different aspects of a people's cultural life together. It provides a foundation for the people's relationships with nature and with each other (Porter & Samovar, 1988). For example, one aspect of Kwakiutl world view is that human beings depend on other elements of nature for their survival. This dependence is presupposed by the Kwakiutl in their practice of

fostering good relations between themselves, plants, and animals. Their various dances are undertaken to ensure that they continue to sustain a harmonious relationship with nature. The precise nature of Aboriginal world views will be discussed at greater length in chapter two.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

In this thesis, I develop an understanding of Aboriginal world views and their implications for the education of Aboriginal adults. Specifically, I analyse those aspects of their world views which form the basis of their relationships with nature. The world views of Aboriginal peoples are inspired by their relationships with nature (Sanderson, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Colorado, 1988). Aboriginal peoples consider themselves to be an integral part of the processes of Creation. (Brown, 1953; Amiotte, 1989; Callicott, 1989; Johnson 1992). Rocks, birds, streams, and animals are also partners in the processes of Creation and like humans are full persons possessing consciousness, reason, and spirituality (Callicott, 1989; Highwater, 1981). The emphasis in this thesis will be to understand Aboriginal world views regarding nature, and

the main implications of these world views for Aboriginal adult education will be explored.

Non-Aboriginal adult educators like myself need to understand Aboriginal world views if we wish to be involved in developing new approaches to the education of Aboriginal adults. For example, we need to comprehend such world views before suggesting ways in which Aboriginal foresters might be trained. Sanderson (1992) and the Four Worlds Development Project (1984) show that non-Aboriginal adult educators can assist in the development of new approaches to education suitable for Aboriginal adults by cooperating with Aboriginal communities and organizations.

My reasons for learning about Aboriginal world views are both professional and personal. I have spent a number of years as a teacher, counsellor, and adult educator in an isolated Aboriginal community in the northern interior of British Columbia. At the time I lived and worked there, the community was undergoing great social and cultural upheaval. The pain and trauma that I witnessed and experienced there were fundamental reasons for my departure. This research grew out of my unwillingness to believe that what I experienced represented the totality of Aboriginal life. Further, I believed that there existed in

Aboriginal world views and experience something of great value to myself and other Euro-Canadians. For the last six years, I have studied issues relating to the education of Aboriginal adults in order to acquire perspective on my experiences in that community and regain balance within myself.

Professionally, further knowledge of their world views helps me to become more sensitive to their needs and values, so that as an adult educator I can more readily cooperate with them in the development of curricula. Moreover, by learning more about Aboriginal world views, my own world view is challenged, and a framework is provided for understanding the way I live, think, and feel.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In this thesis I am to gain a deeper understanding of Aboriginal world views, which have great intrinsic value as the fundamental assumptions underpinning Aboriginal cultures. Moreover, they serve to challenge and enrich Euro-Canadian world views. For example, each chapter in the book, Wisdom of the Elders (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992), presents Aboriginal understandings of nature. Descriptions of the cooperative relationships Aboriginal peoples have with nature

challenge Euro-Canadian readers to examine their own relationship with nature. These descriptions provide Euro-Canadians with alternatives to the exploitation and domination which so often mark their relationship with the natural world (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992; Sioui, 1992). The world views of Aboriginal peoples may provide the basis of culturally appropriate approaches to the education of Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal adults.

Educational programs that meet the intellectual and cultural needs of Aboriginal adults are rooted in Aboriginal world views (Winchell & Jones, 1981). Non-Aboriginal adult educators who cooperate with Aboriginal peoples in the development of adult education programs need a full understanding of these world views (North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs, 1987). The best way to gain an understanding of them is by learning from Aboriginal people themselves. Supplementing this direct experience with readings about Aboriginal peoples and cultures assists non-Aboriginal adult educators to become aware of all the various aspects of Aboriginal world views.

The challenge for me in this thesis is to elucidate Aboriginal world views which consist of very different presuppositions from my own. In order to

meet this challenge, I interviewed the Aboriginal staff and students of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre (PGNFC) to gain an understanding of their world views. Then I compared my understanding of their world views with those found in the works of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors. After the interviews were complete, I maintained an ongoing relationship with PGNFC so that I could give periodic progress reports about my research. Continuing this relationship also allowed me to have discussions about my work with three of the original participants. Two of them, the Spiritual Advisor and the former Director of Project Start, read and commented on my work. Their efforts in teaching me to understand and explore Aboriginal world views have been invaluable. Participation in the sweat lodge and pipe ceremony has also helped me understand more of Aboriginal world views by giving me direct, experiential knowledge of them. In analysing Aboriginal world views, I will pay attention to their differences and commonalities, and at the same time recognize the limitations which my own world view places on my understanding of them.

1.4 Methods Used to Conduct this Research

Initially, my intention was to write a thesis which would mark the beginning of an action research project of constructing English curricula based on the world views of Aboriginal adult learners. The impetus for an action research project is normally provided by a group of participants who express a desire to improve certain aspects of their lives. Educators have often engaged in action research projects when implementing new curricula or developing new methods of instruction (Carr, 1986; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Participants reflect on a specific problem, identify a solution, and then plan and carry out actions working towards their goal. Participants compare the actual results of their actions to those that were initially anticipated. At this point, the group may identify other solutions or revise their plans for change. An action research project continues until the participants find an acceptable solution to the problem in question (Carr, 1986; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

Soon after the start of my field research, I became aware of how little I knew of Aboriginal world views. I realized that it was presumptuous to begin an action research project whose aim was to construct English curricula based on Aboriginal world views without an adequate understanding of them. As a

result, I discarded any notion of beginning an action research project and attempted to learn more about the world views of the Aboriginal people participating in the research.

This research developed into an ethnography describing the world views of the Aboriginal people at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. An ethnography attempts to render a full and comprehensive description of the culture of any social group (Anderson, 1990; Fetterman, 1989). An ethnographic study is also holistic. While the constituent parts of a culture are analysed, relationships among these elements are recognised as fundamental parts of a unified system of beliefs and values or world views. For example, an ethnography might examine the funeral dances, songs, and ceremonies of a particular group of Aboriginal people by placing these activities within the context of their world view. It is the context which provides meaning to these activities as the group's funeral rites. Ethnographies endeavour to portray a phenomenon from the perspective of the members of that culture, so that a more accurate understanding of the phenomenon is developed (Fetterman, 1989).

In this research, I invited the Aboriginal staff and students of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre (PGNFC) in Prince George, B.C. to engage in a series of dialogues about Aboriginal worldviews. Prior to conducting my research, I explained the aim and methods of the study to the Native Friendship Centre. The permission and support of this organization was necessary to the success of my research.

I began the field research for this thesis in June of 1992. At the beginning of my research, two meetings were arranged to explain the nature and methods of the research to the prospective participants; one meeting was held with staff and students, the other with the department heads of educational programs. Explanations of the research were repeated when the initial interviews began and when new participants joined the discussions. All participants signed a letter of consent before engaging in any of the interviews.

I held seven interviews which lasted from one to two and a half hours in length. Three group interviews were held with members of the staff and students of Project Refocus, an employment preparation program. The composition of this group changed throughout our series of discussions so that by the final interview only one member of the original group remained. Two

interviews also took place between myself and the Director of the Start Program. At the suggestion of one of the staff, I recorded a class in which various aspects of Sioux and Cree spirituality were taught. Another interview was held with the employment counsellors at the Native Friendship Centre and one of their clients. My final interview was with the Spiritual Advisor of the PGNFC.

The content and direction of this research evolved during the course of our conversations. While I offered my own impressions of Aboriginal life, I joined these conversations "as a learner in the naturalistic setting and became (socialized) to the ways and processes taking place" (Anderson, 1990, p. 149). I n order to understand Aboriginal cultures, I posed questions on topics relating to their world views and then listened to the resulting conversation. For example, during the second interview with students from Project Refocus, I inquired about Aboriginal child-rearing practices in order to understand the assumptions underlying them (Project Refocus, Interview #2). Later in this interview, I asked the participants how their parents had encouraged discipline (Project Refocus, Interview #2). Throughout the discussions, I used questions or comments to clarify certain points,

to summarise information, or to shift the conversation to a related subject when one topic had been exhausted.

During the interviews I tried to be an unobtrusive listener. I was attentive and participated in the conversation by asking questions or offering comments, but I did not attempt to direct our conversations to a predetermined conclusion. During individual interviews, I spoke more frequently because there were no other participants to carry the conversation. Nevertheless, my intent was to listen carefully to the other participants and gain some understanding of their world views.

Following the initial interviews in June of 1992, I maintained contact with four of the original research participants who provided further information and acted as editors of the drafts of my thesis and advisors to my ongoing research. These four were selected as key research participants because they had a deep understanding of Aboriginal world views. Their participation continued during the writing and research until my thesis was submitted in August, 1996. They took part in follow up interviews and read relevant sections of my ongoing work; one participant contributed one of his grandmother's stories. The Spiritual Advisor of PGNFC, helped me to develop a more

inclusive understanding of Aboriginal world views by making me welcome at sweat lodges and pipe ceremonies.

Once the thesis is completed, I shall send a summary of its findings to the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. On final approval of the thesis, the centre will receive a copy of the bound work.

1.5 Delimitations

The research for this thesis was conducted during June, 1992 in the city of Prince George in the northern interior of British Columbia. Participants included the Aboriginal staff and students of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre and an Aboriginal resident of the men's hostel.

1.6 Limitations

In this thesis, I only investigate the world views of Aboriginal people associated with the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. A number of Aboriginal organizations are located in Prince George, but at the time that this research was conducted only the PGNFC offered educational programs to Aboriginal adults. The participants were members of a variety of Aboriginal peoples who live in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Specifically, I

interviewed Tahltan, Carrier, Tsimshian, Cree, Lakota, Ojibwa, Saulteaux, and Métis people. Through them, I was able to learn about many of the Aboriginal world views in western Canada. Nevertheless, the world views of Aboriginal peoples in Canada vary widely, and this research does not represent the full complexity of Aboriginal life.

Another limitation of this research is that my own world view is different from those of the Aboriginal participants. I am a Euro-Canadian, middle class male and although I have lived and worked in Aboriginal communities, I do not share their forms of understanding. I measure time in hours and minutes rather than by the seasons; I am motivated more by individual than group goals and aspirations, and I value material possessions more highly than most Aboriginal people I have met. I am conscious of the need for human beings to live in harmony with nature but doubt I will experience the same spiritual connection with nature as they do. As a result, it is quite possible that I have misinterpreted the world views of the Aboriginal participants in the course of this research. I discuss my own world view at greater length in chapter two.

A further limitation of the research is that I do not have personal knowledge of the Sundance ceremony which I describe in chapter two. The birth of my second child in June, 1995, made it impossible for me to accept an invitation to attend a Sundance later that summer. Thus, my description of the Sundance in chapter two is drawn wholly from a review of the literature and some conversations with the Spiritual Advisor of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. My description is in no way complete and is provided only for the purpose of illustrating aspects of Aboriginal world views.

Moreover, I have only attended a small number of sweatlodges, pipe ceremonies, and smudges at the invitation of the Spiritual Advisor of the PGNFC and others. My descriptions of these ceremonies are a reflection of the personal practices and understandings of the people who led them. More specifically, they reflect the world views of the Lakota people, and do not do full justice to the richness and multiplicity of the practices and understandings expressed in these ceremonies.

In addition, I only include my descriptions of these various ceremonies with the full knowledge and consent of those who led them. People like myself, who

wish to gain greater understanding of Aboriginal world views by attending their spiritual ceremonies should attend those of spiritual leaders recognized in the Aboriginal community, who must be approached respectfully by following the appropriate protocol. In my own case, I presented some tobacco to the Spiritual Advisor of the PGNFC prior to asking him to share his wisdom with me. Protocols for approaching elders or those with special knowledge may differ between communities and cultures.

1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

The following key concepts to be used throughout the thesis are defined as follows:

Aboriginal:

Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act of 1982 defines the term "Aboriginal" as follows: "In this Act, `aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada" (Constitution Act, 1982) In this thesis, the term "Aboriginal" will refer to individuals and groups descended from the original inhabitants of Canada. These individuals and groups also describe themselves as First Nations peoples.

Non-Aboriginal:

The term "non-Aboriginal" refers to residents of Canada who are not descended from its original inhabitants.

World View:

A world view constitutes the fundamental presuppositions or deep structures which comprise the basis of any culture. It is "the way we perceive, apprehend, and then actually experience the world and the communicative structures used to express this experience." (Oliver & Gershman, 1989, p.87). Our perception and apprehension of the world begins in our preconscious awareness with the various forms of life around us. Human beings, like plants, animals, and rocks, are composed of millions of cells and molecules which collaborate with one another in an ongoing process of becoming. Moreover, this process is not confined to the collections of cells we define as human, animal, plant, or rock; interaction also occurs at the cellular and molecular level as well. As humans, our awareness of the world begins when our cells interact with the cells and molecules of other entities (Oliver & Gershman, 1989; Cobb & Griffin, 1976).

This preconscious awareness of and interaction with the organic world around us is the basis of our

understanding of reality. Reality is not static but is a creative process of becoming which does not require human intervention to be sustained. The many events of which we are aware at a preconscious level form the basis of our experience of the world. However, our memories and interpretations of past events form a collective experience which enables us to understand and participate in present and future events. Language, dance, and art also mediate and express both the individual and collective experience, which make up our world views. The Kwakiutl dance, referred to at the beginning of this chapter, for example, is an expression of that people's world view. The dancers' costumes and masks are made from wood, shells, and feathers and affirm their spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental connection to nature. Through costumes, masks, and dance, the participants are transformed into the different supernatural beings which they represent (Tafoya, 1989). Such dances are visual evidence that one aspect of Kwakiutl world view is the interconnectedness of human beings, nature, and the spirit world.

World views are formed through the relationships which members of a culture have both with other human beings and nature. World views are often intuitively

understood and provide a foundation for the language, beliefs, practices, values, and knowledge of any culture. For example, Aboriginal peoples understand that all plants and animals depend on one another for mutual survival; the existence of one ensures the existence of others. Aboriginal peoples also understand that all living things are closely related to one another through mutual dependence, and that human beings are an integral part of this interdependent community. They endow these other living things with spiritual qualities, and the lives of plants and animals are intimately connected to those of human beings (Callicott, 1983).

Georges Sioui (1992), a Huron, contends that natural processes play a far more active role in the development of "Americity", the qualities and characteristics common to all Aboriginal world views, than they do in Western world views. Like Oliver and Gershman's (1989) definition of world view, the premise of "Americity" is that a common, organic conception of reality is formed through the interaction of humans and nature. According to Sioui, "Americity" is formed by the specific relationships among the physical and spiritual processes present in the continent of North America. "Americity" is therefore inextricably linked

to the physical and spiritual qualities of the North American continent, its lakes, seas, mountains, rivers, plants, and animals. For Sioui, this relationship is crucial to the development and continuance of "Americity", and accounts not only for the similarity of many Aboriginal world views, but also for the tenacity and longevity of these world views in the face of the domination of Aboriginal peoples by Europeans.

Another Aboriginal author, Marie Battiste (1986), has also defined and explained the term "world view" as it pertains to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Battiste broadly defines world view as the theoretical assumptions underlying the knowledge and philosophy of an Aboriginal people. These assumptions are drawn from two sources of knowledge; namely, the personal and collective perceptions, thoughts, and experiences of Aboriginal persons; and the visions, dreams, and messages from the spiritual dimension of the universe (Battiste, 1986) World views are derived from both sources of knowledge and are recorded on wampum (belts and strings of shells), notched sticks, and, in Micmac culture, petroglyphs. Wampum is used to document political treaties while notched sticks and petroglyphs are used to relate stories, send messages, and describe medicinal cures. These artifacts serve as mnemonics

for oral communication, and Aboriginal world views are shared through the rituals and stories associated with them.

Adult:

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "adult" refers to those individuals who are at least 15 years of age, and who provide or receive spiritual guidance, counselling services, or academic instruction at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. This definition of the term "adult" is in agreement with one proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Lowe (1975).

Adult Education:

UNESCO describes adult education as:

> Organized programmes of education provided for the benefit of and adapted to the needs of persons not in the regular school and university system and generally fifteen or older. (Lowe, 1975, p. 22)

In the context of this research, the definition provided by UNESCO refers to programs of formal academic or vocational study specifically prepared by the Prince George Native Friendship Centre for Aboriginal learners of at least fifteen years of age. However, adult learning at the PGNFC has a far more inclusive character. Aboriginal adults also value

learning which takes place in such Aboriginal rituals and ceremonies as sweat lodges, pipe ceremonies, pow-wows, potlatches, and dances. Through these rituals and ceremonies, Aboriginal adult learners gain a deeper understanding of Aboriginal languages, cultures, and religions. For example, sweat lodge leaders often translate and explain the significance of songs and prayers used in the sweat lodge to those who are unable to understand Lakota. For the purposes of this research, therefore, the term "adult education" includes all learning provided by the Prince George Native Friendship Centre to Aboriginal persons of at least fifteen years of age.

Dakota, Nakota, Lakota:

The terms "Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota" refer to groups of Aboriginal peoples who speak different dialects of the same language (Spiritual Advisor, personal communication, April 26, 1996). According to Leo Omani, a member of the Dakota people of Wahpeton, the speakers of these dialects are collectively referred to as the Sioux (Leo Omani, personal communication, June, 1992). Indeed, Omani (1992, p. 125) states that: "in spite of the slight differences of dialect, the Aboriginal cultural ceremonies and

spirituality of the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota Peoples are the same."

Oyate:

The English translation of the term, "Oyate ", is "the people" and refers to the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota peoples (Spiritual Advisor, personal communication, April 26, 1996).

Chanunpa:

The term "Chanunpa" is the Lakota word for the "Sacred Pipe" which was given to them by Whope, the White Buffalo Calf Woman. The "Sacred Pipe" has great spiritual significance for the Lakota people and forms the centrepiece of the pipe ceremony by which they communicate with the spiritual dimensions of the universe (McGaa, 1990; Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990). My understanding of the pipe ceremony and the significance of the "Chanunpa" are explained in greater depth in section two of chapter three.

Sweatlodge:

The term "sweatlodge" refers to the low, dome-like structure in which the sweatlodge ceremony takes place. The Lakota word for this structure is "Initi" (Brown,

1953; McGaa, 1990; Adams, 1990). It is made from sixteen willow saplings which are bent over and tied together to form a dome which is covered by tarpaulins, blankets, or other materials. In the centre of the "Initi" floor is a circular pit where the heated rocks are placed during the sweatlodge ceremony (Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990; McGaa, 1990). My understanding is that these pits may have a variety of depths and shapes which change according to the purpose of an individual sweatlodge ceremony and the particular understandings of the sweatloadge ceremony leader. Brown (1953) notes that the opening to the "Initi" is on the eastern side of the lodge, although at the sweatlodge ceremony I attended the opening was at the west.

Inipi:

The term "Inipi" refers to the spiritual ceremony which takes place within the "Initi". In the "Inipi" ceremony, human beings affirm their interconnectedness with other aspects of the universe through prayer and meditation. "Inipi" ceremonies may be held for the purpose of purification, healing, or to prepare the participants for an important spiritual event like the Sundance or vision quest (Brown, 1953; McGaa, 1990; Adams, 1990). The spiritual significance ascribed to

individual parts of the "Initi" and their physical dimensions may vary as may the understandings which underlie the forms of prayer and meditation. I have come to understand that different communities and spiritual leaders may conduct the "Inipi" ceremony in different ways. For an explanation of my understanding of the "Inipi " ceremony and its significance, see section two of chapter three.

Wakan Tanka:

The term "Wakan Tanka" is used by the Lakota people to refer to the most spiritually significant dimensions of the universe which are understood in several different ways. Walker (1980) and Lewis (1990) claim that "Wakan Tanka" is considered by some to be the equivalent of the Christian God. Paradoxically, Walker (1980), DeMaillie (1984), and Adams (1990) also indicate that others understand "Wakan Tanka" to comprise sixteen benevolent, interrelated beings who are clearly non-human but share many human characteristics. This collection of spiritual beings complement one another and at once create the universe and embody it in a continuous process of creation.

The difference between these two understandings introduces the question of whether "Wakan Tanka" is one

or many. Another understanding which may possibly resolve this paradox is that "Wakan Tanka" is not an entity but a relationship that conjoins and enhances all entities. For example, two Lakota participants in Walker's (1980) research, Little Wound and Good Seat, as well as the Spiritual Advisor of the PGNFC (Fieldnotes, March 28, 1995), consider all entities in the universe that did something, caused something to become, or were involved in the process of becoming as aspects of the "Wakan Tanka". This conception of "Wakan Tanka" is of a relationship connecting animals, streams, rocks, trees, lakes, and all the actions which they may perform, regardless of the effect of those actions.

1.8. Chapter Outline

In chapter one, I provide a statement of purpose for this thesis, a brief explanation of the concept of world view, an analysis of the methodology used in my research, and a definition of the key concepts used in this thesis. In chapter two, I first analyse the philosophical assumptions underlying Aboriginal world views and then reflect on my own world view, concentrating on its relationship to research conducted in this thesis. Chapter three examines the themes that

emerged in my conversations with the Aboriginal participants, specifically those of spirituality and harmonious relationships. Chapter four examines the main implications of my findings about Aboriginal world views for current approaches to the education of Aboriginal adults.

2. COMPARING ABORIGINAL AND EURO-CANADIAN CONCEPTIONS OF NATURE AND SPIRITUALITY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I consider an aspect of Aboriginal world views that appears both in the literature and in my research; namely, the ways in which Aboriginal peoples conceive of their relationship with nature. In particular, I analyse the spirituality which characterises that relationship. In reviewing the literature, I consider the works of Aboriginal scholars as well those of non-Aboriginal scholars in order to gain an inclusive understanding of this relationship.

I then go on to consider my own world view as a Euro-Canadian and the manner in which it has affected my understanding of nature. By making my own world view apparent, a fuller understanding of the context of this research and the assumptions underlying it is possible. An analysis of three different interpretations of Christianity follows in which the differences and similarities between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian world views regarding nature are stressed. Finally, I discuss the challenges I faced

doing cross-cultural research in light of the relationship between language and world view.

This chapter prepares the reader for chapter three where I analyse my conversations and experiences with the Aboriginal participants in this research. The twin themes of harmony with nature and spirituality in nature re-emerge during the course of these conversations.

2.2 Aboriginal World Views

World views form the deep structures or fundamental presuppositions which constitute the basis of any culture (Porter & Samovar, 1988; Oliver & Gershman, 1989; Feleppa, 1988). World views are formed through the relationships human beings have with one another and the natural world. World views are often experienced at a preconscious level and provide a way for human beings to interpret the realities around them (Black, 1970). As such, a world view provides the foundation of the languages, beliefs, practices, values, and knowledge of any culture (Oliver & Gershman, 1989).

The relationship between Aboriginal peoples and nature is a central feature of their world views. It provides the foundation for the relationships Aboriginal peoples have to one another and to the spiritual entities which inhabit their universe. Many Aboriginal peoples of Canada have a

close and enduring relationship with the natural world (Ross, 1992; Vecsey, 1980; Ridington, 1988; Colorado, 1988 & Johnson, 1992). While nature's gifts ensure human survival, Aboriginal peoples also understand and value the natural world as a manifestation of the sacred. (Ridington, 1988; Vecsey, 1980; Brown, 1953; Neihardt, 1932; McGaa, 1990; Means, 1990) For example:

> ..... the typical traditional American Indian attitude was to regard all features of the environment as enspirited. These entities possessed a consciousness, reason, and volition, no less intense and complete than a human being's. The Earth itself, the sky, the winds, rocks, streams, trees, insects, birds and all other animals therefore had personalities and were thus as fully persons as other human beings. (Callicott, 1983, pg. 243)

This implies that there is no fundamental difference between human beings and the other aspects of nature since they all share in the spiritual dimensions of the universe. Aboriginal peoples recognise their kinship with rocks, fish, and streams who are all persons because, like humans, they possess consciousness, reason, purpose, and spiritual characteristics. For example, some Carrier people recognize a social bond between human beings and animals. An elder of Tl'azt'en Nations once said to me, "I don't shoot ducks in the springtime because they like to have babies and raise their families just like we do." In this statement, the

elder was acknowledging that ducks and persons are alike because they both desire to raise their families in peace.

Describing his experiences during a vision quest, another Aboriginal author, Eber Hampton recounts how he became aware of his kinship with other people and nature in general:

> On the second day of the fast, as I prayed I began to ask myself, "Who are my people?" Over the following days my identity expanded from my own skin outward to family, friends, relatives, Indian people, other humans, animals, growing things, to finally reach the earth itself and everything that is. I came away from the fast with a deep awareness of feeling at home, related to all that is. (Hampton, 1993, pp 283-284)

The feeling of being connected to all other creatures and to the earth itself grew out of the experience of fasting and prayer, both of which engendered the question, "Who are my people?". In answering this question, the author realised that the identity of Aboriginal peoples included all aspects of the universe. Far from being isolated individuals separated from the other aspects of nature, Aboriginal peoples are intimately related to the world of nature, to each other, and to the entirety of the universe. Within this connectedness lies their strength.

A central belief common to many Aboriginal world views is that by integrating themselves with the physical and spiritual processes of nature, human beings enhance their continued wellbeing (Ross, 1992; Brown, 1992; Hultkrantz,

1981; Hassrick, 1964; Callicott, 1989; Colorado, 1988). Aboriginal peoples understand themselves as dependent on nature because plants, animals, and fish provide them with food and clothing. Knowledge of other beings helps Aboriginal peoples enmesh themselves with the natural rhythms and events crucial to their survival. They often pay close attention to the natural world when faced with circumstances requiring a decision. For example, when deciding whether or not to pick berries, the Ojibwa determine how ripe the berries are likely to get, not how ripe they actually are (Ross, 1992). For the Ojibwa, survival through the winter depends on acquiring maximum nutritional value from berries which comprise a large portion of their food supply. Recognition of their dependence upon other beings heightens Aboriginal peoples' awareness of the spiritual and physical processes of nature.

The Sundance is another way in which the link between human beings and the physical and spiritual processes of nature is celebrated by certain Aboriginal peoples. The Sundance is an annual celebration held in early summer by peoples like the Lakota, Cheyenne, Shoshonne, and Cree who live on the Great Plains of North America. The actual form of the Sundance differs slightly among each of the groups, but the intent of honouring all living things and the Wakan Tanka, the harmonious interrelationship of all beings who

embody the processes of Creation, is common to all (Adams, 1990; DeMallie, 1984; Walker, 1980). During the Sundance, several Aboriginal peoples may meet to celebrate the rebirth of their world and to ensure the continuance of the cycle of the seasons (Brown, 1992; Brown, 1953; Hassrick, 1964). To help the cycle of the seasons continue, men and women undergo rigorous spiritual training to endure the great physical hardships necessary to participate in this ceremony.

The Sundance takes place around the trunk of a cottonwood tree placed upright in a pit at the centre of a circular lodge carefully constructed to represent the universe (Brown, 1992; Adams, 1990). The cottonwood tree becomes the axis of the earth and symbolises the male form of life embedded in Mother Earth (Brown, 1992). All forms of life are represented within the bounds of the Sundance Lodge by little clay figurines (Brown, 1992). Dancers are ritually purified in a sweat lodge (Brown, 1992; Brown, 1953; Hassrick, 1964; Adams, 1990) and begin the dance by removing pieces of their flesh to offer in gratitude for Wakan Tanka or attaching rawhide thongs which run through their flesh to the cottonwood tree (Hassrick, 1964; Brown, 1992; Brown, 1953; Hultkrantz, 1981; Adams, 1990; Mcgaa, 1990). The thongs are a physical connection to the harmony of Wakan Tanka whose strength flows down the cottonwood tree

and through the thongs into the bodies of the dancers (Brown, 1953). The dancers move toward and away from the cottonwood tree without respite throughout the hot summer day until they succeed in pulling the thongs out of their bodies.

By taking part in the Sundance, the dancers are affirming their kinship with the world. Their sacrifice demonstrates their gratitude for the gifts of nature and the dependence of all people on them. By giving thanks for the harmony of Wakan Tanka, the dancers guarantee that their peoples will enjoy such bounties in the future. Throughout the Sundance groups like the Lakota request that the universe continue its cycle for another year. The participation of Aboriginal peoples in ceremonies like the Sundance shows the importance of their integration with the processes of nature. Aboriginal peoples believe that they have responsibilities to fulfill in order that life may flourish and the cycles of nature continue unchecked.

Most Aboriginal peoples believe that animals and birds have spiritual powers greater than those of humans (Brown, 1953; Hassrick, 1964; Ridington, 1988; Walker, 1980; Hallowell, 1992). According to Brown (1982), Hassrick (1964), and Amiotte (1989), some Lakota people seek visions in which these creatures bring messages to them from Wakan Tanka. Visions are eagerly sought because the advice or

power conferred through these experiences usually results in the acquisition of special status, new responsibilities, and enhanced physical or spiritual prowess. Black Elk performed his most famous vision in which powerful Thunder Beings appeared in order to guide his people through the chaotic years of change following their confinement to reservations in the last decade of the nineteenth century (Neihardt, 1932). The appearance of certain animals or birds in these visions is indicative of specific powers or obligations being granted to the vision seeker (Hassrick, 1964). Those people who see buffalo in their visions might be endowed with some of the animal's physical or spiritual qualities and are considered to have a special affinity for this animal (Hassrick, 1964). Prior to the destruction of the buffalo herds in the late 19th century, a vision in which buffalo appeared was judged a useful and important asset to the Lakota who depended upon the buffalo for the necessities of life.

Similarly, until recent times, the vision quest was a desired experience for children of the Dunne-za who live in the northeastern corner of British Columbia (Ridington, 1988). According to Dunne-za tradition, young children are sent alone into the bush, so that they can gain an intimate, spiritual understanding of some aspects of the natural world (Ridington, 1988; Ridington, 1990). As with Lakota visions,

the spiritual manifestations of animals, birds, or insects offer their knowledge and advice to the young children. The knowledge and understanding that they gain guides them throughout their lives and assists them to become more effective members of the community. As the children become adults and finally elders, their original knowledge is deepened through contemplation and by having further visions (Ridington, 1990; Ridington, 1988). Visions allow the Beaver and other Aboriginal peoples to achieve a profound understanding and affinity for their world through their connection to the spiritual processes of nature.

As Aboriginal peoples interact with other beings who inhabit the world, they foster good relationships with all living things (Callicott, 1989; Colorado, 1988). According to many Aboriginal world views, human beings should disturb their natural environment as little as possible (Ross, 1992). Living harmoniously with the other beings who inhabit their shared world requires people to consider the effects of their actions. When gathering food of any kind, some should always be left behind to provide nourishment for other beings and to ensure a continuing supply in the future. Many Aboriginal people place small amounts of tobacco at the base of medicinal plants from which they have taken a root or some leaves. In doing so, they are giving thanks to the plant and making recompense for the damage

they have caused. (Sanderson, 1992) Greed upsets the balance of nature and should be avoided. The excessive exploitation of one part of nature ensures that other living things essential to the unity of the natural world are unable to thrive.

The emphasis placed on encouraging a harmonious relationship with nature flows directly from the belief that everything in the world is endowed with spiritual qualities. Some Aboriginal hunters from the Ojibwa and Beaver nations communicate with the spirits of those animals which they need for their survival (Ross, 1992; Ridington, 1988; Hallowell, 1992). Hunters ask animals to give up their lives in order to ensure the survival of the hunter's family. Instead of pursuing animals, Aboriginal hunters seek the appropriate places where these animals will give up their lives (Ross, 1992; Ridington, 1988; Hallowell, 1992). If the animals allow themselves to be killed, the hunters thank their spirits for being generous to them (Callicott, 1983; Highwater, 1981; Ross, 1992). When hunters thank the animal spirits, they hope all other animals will recognize their gratitude and continue to offer their lives so that humans might survive. Ingratitude causes the animals to withhold themselves from humans.

All of this suggests that there is no real separation among human beings and other living things; all are united

through ties of kinship. All beings are kin because they are the offspring of Mother Earth, and their bodies return to her once they die. This kinship requires reciprocity among human beings and the plants, trees, animals, rocks, and lakes who are their relatives. Plants and animals give up their lives in order that human beings might live, and humans are obligated to repay the generosity of their relatives by thanking them with gifts or prayers.

2.3 My World View as a Euro-Canadian

My first small understanding of how Aboriginal peoples might relate to the world around them came when I was paddling a canoe up the South Saskatchewan River. Although the canoe I was paddling was made from modern materials, its basic design was similar to those perfected over hundreds of years by the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Paddling in the slower water close to the shore, my biggest problem was manoeuvering around rocks and other obstacles. These obstacles caused currents which could carry my bow off course. On this particular day, I learned that if I started my turn slightly before I reached the rock, I could compensate for the current's strength. Moreover, the current would actually help me complete my turn once the centre of my canoe passed by it.

Using technology originally developed by Aboriginal people, I began to understand what it could mean to be in harmony with nature. These currents were not foes to be combatted but allies who could help me up the river. My task was to work in concert with them by placing myself in the best position to benefit from their strength and direction. In doing so, I gave up any notion of being in complete control of the canoe; the currents, the canoe, and I formed a synergistic relationship which could be broken easily by my inattention. Paddling the river was now not simply moving from one place to another, it was learning to trust the river and mold myself to its moods and character. Experiencing such a relationship would have been almost impossible in anything other than a craft designed by Aboriginal peoples who sought to integrate themselves with their world.

It is sometimes difficult for Canadians of European descent to understand Aboriginal world views which emphasize maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature. At best, the phrase "maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature" sounds suspiciously unproductive to many Euro-Canadians. It is at odds with the vision of their ancestors hewing a civilisation from the plains and forests of North America. To some, it might appear like an ill-considered philosophy spouted from the mouths of radical

environmentalists protesting the honest toil of others who extract resources from the land. Towns in northern British Columbia like Prince George, Williams Lake, Fort St. James, Mackenzie, and Fort Nelson exist to extract and process resources from the surrounding wilderness. Many look upon the environment as an undeveloped asset just waiting to be exploited with little heed to the consequences of that exploitation. Reforestation and other measures which mitigate some of the exploitation of wilderness are primarily intended to ensure a continuous supply of trees for future harvests.

It was in this atmosphere that I grew up in the mill town of Prince George in the 1960s. At this time, Prince George was undergoing an unprecedented expansion, largely based on the exploitation of natural resources in the area. Added to the large number of sawmills in the area, three pulp mills were being built on the banks of the Fraser River. In those days, effluent from the pulp mills was pumped directly into the Fraser and sulphorous smoke clouded the air. To the north, massive dams along the Peace River system were built to generate hydro electricity and resulted in the creation of Williston Lake. For most people, well paying jobs in the forest industry were easy to find. There seemed to be an endless supply of trees; maintaining a

harmonious relationship with an easily tamed natural world was considered unnecessary.

Domination and exploitation continue to characterize the relationship many Euro-Canadians have with nature although some manage to live more cooperatively with natural processes. The person from whom I gained the greatest understanding of the natural world was my grandfather, who farmed near Sooke on Vancouver Island. My grandfather's life was dictated by the rhythms of the farm; the tasks and challenges which faced him every year were similar to those in previous years. He regularly cut down trees for firewood and fencing materials from the forest surrounding the fields, but no area was ever denuded of all trees or any one species of tree. He watched over and cared for his land until his death; making sure not to exploit it or denude it. The ashes of my grandfather and grandmother are scattered in a grove of mature cedar trees; a place that my grandmother had always considered quiet, peaceful, and possessing spiritual qualities.

My grandparents taught me to respect and love the land on which the family farm sat. Surrounded by my aunts, uncles, and cousins and allowed to go anywhere on the property, I grew up loving the farm and the lifestyle that went with it. When I was a child, my goal was to farm the same land in turn, and at times I still imagine their life

on the farm to have been idyllic. Their pastoral vision of how humans should interact with the natural world molded my ideas about nature. Through their work making fields, fence lines, and a small dam for irrigation, my grandparents had created a micro-environment uniquely adapted to their needs, and yet they achieved success by working in harmony with nature. The fence lines were overgrown with blackberry bushes whose thorns acted as reinforcements for the barbed wire, and whose berries were a late summer treat. The amount of firewood and fencing materials taken from the forest never taxed its ability to regenerate itself, and a stream of water continued to flow along its natural course after a small irrigation dam had been built. The farm was so constructed that it was possible for my grandparents to sustain their family by working as part of a natural environment which they had helped form. However, this way of life was exceptional among those experienced by most Canadian farmers enmeshed in the economic realities of agriculture in a modern industrial state. In order to ensure their economic survival, such farmers artificially increase their crops and profits through the use of chemical agents as fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides although their use often leads to the destruction of the land.

2.4 Euro-Canadian World Views

The world views of Europeans who live in Western societies like Canada presuppose that it is proper for human beings to dominate the natural world (Attfield, 1983; Black, 1970; Callicott, 1983; Whisenhunt, 1974; O'Briant, 1974). Attfield (1983), Black (1970), Callicott (1983), O'Briant (1974), and Whisenhunt (1974) all agree that the Bible has been very influential in the development of Western world views. From the interpretation of biblical texts, two popular traditions regarding nature have developed. Neither tradition challenges the anthropocentric premise that human beings are superior to the other aspects of Creation, but each requires that humans act towards nature in different ways. In the "despotic tradition", few hindrances are placed on the use of natural resources by human beings except those that would adversely affect the lives of other people (Attfield, 1983). For example, the use of pesticides would be discontinued only if such use were dangerous to humans. The despotic tradition encourages humans to manipulate nature to their own advantage (Whisenhunt, 1974; Black, 1970). Those who now work the land in Saskatchewan in huge, air-conditioned tractors and combine harvesters are further removed from the natural world than their ancestors who plowed and harvested by using animals. Indeed, Euro-

Canadians often measure their sophistication by how far they are removed from nature.

Like the despotic tradition, the "stewardship tradition" never seriously questions the assumption that human beings are superior to nature (Attfield, 1983). According to this tradition, human beings are responsible to God for their treatment of the natural world (Black, 1970; Attfield, 1983). Black (1970) and Attfield (1983) point out that ample justification for sustaining the natural environment and managing the extent of resource use can be found in the Bible. In Genesis 2:15, God commands human beings to take care of the world's resources by managing their use. Biblical injunctions may not have the same force now as they did in former times, but the stewardship tradition is still quite strong. Many Euro-Canadians are now becoming conscious of the potential for disaster in human beings' interaction with nature if for no other reason than the wasteful and improper use of the world's resources threatens the survival of human life on this planet (Suzuki, 1992).

There is, however, a third tradition within Christianity which does challenge the assumption that human beings are superior to nature. Process theology rejects traditional Christian beliefs in which God is conceived as a being wholly independent from the world, controlling the

universe and acting as the divine lawgiver and judge. In process theology, God and all other entities in the universe exemplify its fundamental principle which is that of creativity (Cobb & Griffin, 1976). This principle becomes concrete when any of these entities realise their capacity to act in novel ways in relation to others. These actions, which Hartshorne (1951) and Bixler (1951) term "events", bring about all kinds of possibilities for deeper fulfilment that were previously hidden (Bixler, 1951; Cobb & Griffin, 1976). Entities as diverse as subatomic particles, amoebae, humans, and elephants are all creative and are intimately connected with one another. The role of God is to receive the completion of these events into the harmony of His own experience. Without God, entities would remain diverse and unable to achieve harmony with one another. Indeed, without God, entities cannot achieve an ultimate harmony with the rest of the universe (Whitehead, 1929).

An example of how the principle of creativity works in nature is when a wolf pack makes a decision to kill a calf moose in the middle of winter. A number of possibilities present themselves here. The most obvious is that the calf moose will fail to survive the winter. If the wolves are successful, the calf moose will not have any progeny, and a number of problems due to over-population such as disease, starvation, and environmental damage caused by over-grazing

will be averted. However, any plant seeds which the moose could have carried on its hide or in its digestive tract will not now be transplanted to new locations. Also, once the calf moose is killed, other predators like bears and humans will no longer be able to nourish themselves through the carcass of that calf moose or its progeny. For the wolves, a moose carcass will provide their family with energy they need to kill other animals but will limit the amount of moose available to them in the future. In addition, killing a large animal like a moose is hazardous; individual wolves can be injured or killed, thereby affecting the strength of the pack. The decomposing body of the calf moose will also attract animals like coyotes, bears, and ravens, for whom the carcass will supply a ready source of food. Its dismembered skeleton and the scats of animals which have eaten from it provide a rich fertilizer for the plants and grasses.

The wolves may have found a wayward and inexperienced calf separated from its mother. In future winters, the cow will ensure that her calves remain closer, providing her young with a greater degree of protection. The cow's increased understanding of protecting her young from predation may become part of the knowledge and experience of subsequent generations. Wolves must then develop new methods of circumventing the cow's protective strategy.

Similarly, the death of the calf moose may be incorporated into the experiences of other animals like crows, ravens, bears, and coyotes who receive nourishment from the carcass. The wolves have kept the number of large herbivores in check while the willows and water lilies upon which all moose depend will continue to thrive and provide nourishment for all animals because they have not been over-grazed. In this way, the death of the calf moose achieves harmony in the relationships among plant and animal species.

My own understanding of God and nature has been influenced by both the stewardship tradition of Christianity and Aboriginal spirituality. I consider nature to be sacred and the manifestation of a life-sustaining being which I call God. The universe is not separate from God; He exists in every aspect of the universe, and every aspect of the universe exists in God. The universe is a constantly changing, creative organism generated by God in which the gifts or characteristics of one part complement those of every other. For example, wolves and other predators are a necessary part of this organism so that animals such as deer and moose will not over-graze the land on which they live. Human beings are related to the other parts of nature and depend on them for their continued existence. However, humans are capable of more complex thought and have the potential to exercise greater influence over other aspects

of nature. As such, we are at once dependent and weaker and more responsible for what we do. For this reason, we are obliged to consider the consequences which our actions may have for our non-human cousins.

2.5 The Relationship Between Christianity and Aboriginal World Views

Since the arrival of European missionaries in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Christian conceptions of God have influenced those of Aboriginal peoples like the Lakota. Around the turn of the twentieth century, J.R. Walker (1980) noted that when the younger Lakotas referred to Wakan Tanka, they meant the Christian God. Similarly Thomas Lewis (1990) claims that Wakan Tanka is often considered the equivalent of the Christian God at least in the outward expression of Lakota spirituality. However, Lewis did the majority of his research in the late 1960s at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota when the inhabitants were experiencing deep, internal divisions within their community caused by and facing increasing pressure and harassment from the federal government in the United States. The equation of the Christian God and Wakan Tanka might not have been an authentic expression of Lakota spirituality but simply part of an effort to make peace within a community split between those who had become Christian and those who followed Lakota spirituality. It may also have been a

tactic to deflect government scrutiny. Evidence of Christianity's influence on Lakota spirituality can be found in the works of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal writers alike, notably DeMallie (1984), McGaa, (1990), Neihardt (1932), and Adams (1990).

According to DeMallie (1984), the concept of Wakan Tanka prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries was a quite different and more inclusive concept. Wakan Tanka was not one identifiable being but rather a collection of spiritually powerful beings who complemented each other. They both created the universe and embodied it in a continuous process of creation. DeMallie (1984), Walker (1980), and Adams (1990), believe that Wakan Tanka comprise sixteen benevolent, interrelated beings who are clearly non-human but share many human characteristics. Wohpe, the sacred being who brought the Chanunpa to the Lakota, and Wi, the sun, who represents the source of all life in the Sundance are parts of Wakan Tanka. Little Wound and Good Seat, who were Aboriginal participants in Walker's research, went further than this by including all entities in the universe that did something, caused something to become, or were involved in the processes of becoming as aspects of Wakan Tanka. This conception of Wakan Tanka included animals, rocks, streams, rivers, lakes, and all of the actions ascribed to them regardless of their effect on

humans or other beings (Walker, 1980). For example, a rock slide which blocked off a trail would be considered an aspect of Wakan Tanka. For Little Wound, Wakan Tanka filled the universe and needed to be placated because human beings, although part of Wakan Tanka, were of inferior strength and minor importance. Human beings, therefore had to mold themselves to the natural processes around them so that they were in harmony with other aspects of Wakan Tanka (Walker, 1980).

The degree of influence accorded to human beings is perhaps the greatest difference between process theology and traditional Lakota spirituality. According to process theology, human beings and other entities have creative opportunities for bringing about novel events within the process of becoming in the universe as a whole (Cobb & Griffin, 1976). Human beings are no more important than other beings but are more complex and have greater potential to be creative (Thomas, 1970). For Lakotas, like Little Wound, however, human beings have less influence on this process than other aspects of the universe and fulfill a minor role in Wakan Tanka (Walker, 1980). Animals and birds are considered to be of more spiritual significance than human beings because of their greater importance within the processes of creation. For example, as Wakan Tanka's media of communication, they often bring messages and advice when

appearing in the visions and dreams of human beings (Brown, 1953).

What process theologians mean by the concept of "God" and what traditional Lakotas mean by "Wakan Tanka" are also different. For process theologians, God is a spiritual entity who possesses a primordial and consequent nature. God's primordial nature mirrors the principle of creativity which characterises the interrelationships among all entities in the universe. The concrete results of creativity are "events", the momentary actions which flow from the interrelationships among all entities. God's primordial nature structures the completion of events by providing all entities with the potential to achieve self-fulfilment (Bixler, 1951). God's consequent nature receives these concrete and momentary events into His own being, thereby harmonising them so as to achieve a synthesis of truth, beauty, and goodness (Bixler, 1951; Whitehead, 1929).

In traditional Lakota spirituality, Wakan Tanka is a relationship of sixteen beings whose characteristics complement one another as the primary creative influences of the universe (Demallie, 1984; Walker, 1980; Adams, 1990). For Adams (1990), these sixteen beings are composed of the fundamental elements of creation such as the Sun and the Earth, significant natural forces like the Wind and Thunder, animals of great importance to the Lakota like the Buffalo

and the Bear, and the four parts of the human soul. All beings in creation reside in the wholeness of Wakan Tanka, but some Lakota believe that this particular group of more influential members have to be appeased in order to ensure their good favour toward human beings (Walker, 1980). For example, the Sundance expresses the gratitude of the Lakota people for the Sun's role in the turning of the seasons and the rebirth and growth of plants necessary to the survival of humans and animals (Brown, 1982). It is also an earnest supplication on the part of the Lakota that this period of growth recur next year. Unlike the notion of God found in process theology, the Lakota conception of Wakan Tanka is one which is both personal and immediate. The naming of the sixteen primary, creative beings of Wakan Tanka is symbolic of the personal nature of the relationships among human beings and all other parts of Wakan Tanka. This is in direct contrast to the more abstract and impersonal notion of the consequent nature of God found in Process theology.

Process theology and traditional Lakota spiritual beliefs are similar in their belief that the universe is considered to be a group of creative, spiritual entities that are intimately related to each other. In both belief systems, the universe is characterized by the constantly shifting and evolving relationships among the entities which form it (DeMallie, 1984; Walker, 1980; Cobb & Griffin, 1976;

Bixler, 1951). In Lakota spiritual beliefs, these relationships occur among conscious beings like animals, humans, rocks, streams, and individuals like Wohpe. Communication between humans and these other beings forming Wakan Tanka occur through dreams, visions, prayer, and meditation (Walker, 1980; Adams, 1992; McGaa, 1990). Process theologians believe that human beings are closely related to all other entities such as trees, rocks, and streams. Relationships between humans and these other creatures of the universe occur at a preconscious level and are hence often hidden from consciousness (Cobb & Griffin, 1976). Earlier in this chapter, I described the moment when I learned how the current could help me manoeuvre my canoe around obstacles and propel it upstream. Several years and thousands of kilometres of paddling later, I often feel as though the current tells me where it would be best to go and what stroke I should use to get there. Paddling is no longer a conscious act, but a natural response to the river.

In both process theology and Lakota spirituality, the relationships which characterize the non-human world are considered to be the epitome of harmony. The Lakota, for example, seek to unite themselves with the harmonious processes of nature by participating in ceremonies such as the Sundance (Brown, 1992; Brown, 1953; Hassrick, 1964; Adams, 1990). For process theologians like Bixler (1951),

the harmony found among the natural processes of growth is an inspiration for human beings.

The more familiar notions of God and nature prevalent in Christianity have had a great influence on contemporary Lakota spirituality, however. The conceptions of Wakan Tanka found in the works of Demallie (1984), Brown (1953), and Neihardt (1932) are examples of such influence. They all gained some understanding of Lakota spirituality from Black Elk. Black Elk Speaks (Neihardt, 1932) and The Sacred Pipe (Brown, 1953) are two of the best known and most often quoted texts on this subject. Black Elk was a holy man of repute among the Lakota who, at the turn of the century, was converted to Catholicism. According to Demallie (1984), this conversion led him to conceive of Wakan Tanka as the personification of the six Grandfathers similar to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the Christian Godhead. Nonetheless, throughout all the works that were inspired by Black Elk's teachings, it is evident that Black Elk himself still believed that animals and other aspects of nature were endowed with spiritual characteristics superior to those of humans.

The influence of Christianity can also be found in the ecumenical intent of Black Elk's teachings and those of later Aboriginal authors like Adams (1990), McGaa (1990) and Wallace Black Elk (1991). Black Elk accentuates the

peaceful aspects of Lakota spirituality and world view, and gives his teachings a universal character. The Sacred Hoop, which has become a metaphor for the interrelatedness of all Creation, originally included only the Lakota and those aspects of nature necessary for their survival (DeMallie, 1984). Black Elk expanded the meaning of this metaphor to include all the peoples and continents of the world. Similarly, the intent of Adams's (1990), McGaa's (1990) and Wallace Black Elk's (1991) teachings is to promote universal harmony and salvation through the practice of Lakota spirituality.

Thus, there are two strands present in contemporary Lakota spirituality: one that shows a Christian influence and one that predates the arrival of Canadians and Americans of European descent. Two of the best known and most widely referenced books on Lakota spirituality, Black Elk Speaks (Niehardt, 1932) and The Sacred Pipe (Brown, 1953), reflect the influence Christianity has had on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs. Black Elk's spiritual thought is clearly grounded in a Lakota spirituality that was modified by an extensive training in Roman Catholicism (DeMaillie, 1984). It is syncretic, a combination of traditional Aboriginal spirituality and Christian theology. Lakota authors such as Adams (1990), Mcgaa (1990), and Wallace Black Elk (1991)

exemplify a similar spiritual understanding that runs through their work.

2.6 Language, Culture, and the Context of this Research

When I began this research, I had little conception of what could comprise Aboriginal world views. I had lived and worked in an Aboriginal community in the northern interior of British Columbia, but I had little understanding of the world views of the people who lived there. When I came to university to begin my Master's degree, I was exhausted by the strain of working in another culture in a community experiencing social upheaval. I was unwilling to believe that the pain and suffering I saw and experienced in the community I lived in represented the totality of Aboriginal life. Time to study also provided the opportunity for me to reflect on my experiences and to gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal cultures.

In my search for a greater understanding of Aboriginal cultures, I was guided and assisted by Aboriginal colleagues and friends. Some looked upon my research favourably, perhaps because they believed that my intentions were good. Others challenged my fitness as a non-Aboriginal to do research with Aboriginal peoples. They were concerned that my own world views and my lack of fluency in an Aboriginal language would limit and distort my understanding of

Aboriginal world views. These challenges to the validity of this research led me to consider the relationship between Aboriginal languages and world views.

One of the challenges of cross-cultural research is that it is difficult to describe one culture's world view in the language of another. Concepts and experiences common in one culture may be uncommon or completely absent in another, and these differences are reflected in the language (Whorf, 1939). Since world views are the basic assumptions and presuppositions which comprise the basis of a particular culture (Oliver & Gersham, 1989; Samovar & Porter, 1988; Black, 1970), they are reflected in the language of that culture.

Whorf's (1939) hypothesis, which states that language reflects the unique nature of a group's common experience, has received wide acceptance by many scholars (Carroll, 1963; Kay & Kempton, 1984; Salzman, 1993; Fishman 1980). A more radical interpretation asserts that cognitive differences and world views are themselves determined by language (Salzman, 1993; Sherzer, 1987). According to both views, unilingual speakers of one culture are only able to gain an imperfect understanding of another culture and world view. This is because the languages, cognitive patterns, and world views of both cultures are so dissimilar that there can be no exact translation of concepts from one

language to another. Both Whorf's hypothesis and its more radical interpretation have become axiomatic for some anthropologists (Fishman, 1980).

By way of contrast, Salzman (1993) acknowledges that, while language and culture are interrelated, there is little correlation between a certain type of culture and a particular language. He rejects Whorf's hypothesis that language alone determines culture, as well as the notion that the world view of a particular group has a purely linguistic base. For example, Aboriginal peoples inhabiting the Great Plains region of North America speak different languages but have similar cultures and world views (Salzman, 1993) The Arapaho and Cheyenne speak Algonquian languages, the Crow and Dakota speak Siouan languages, the Sarcee and Kiowa Apache speak Athapaskan languages, and the Shoshone and Commanche speak Uto-Aztecan languages, yet all have similar cultures (Salzman, 1993). Brown supports this claim by noting that there is a unity of sacred intent in the Sun Dance "even though (*it is*) expressed by different groups in multiple rich and varied dialects" (Brown, 1991, p. 102) According to Brown (1991), the ceremonies and actions in the Sun Dance, as practised by the Lakota, Arapaho, Gros Ventre, Blackfoot, Cree, Cheyenne, and Crow/Shoshone, differ only in form but not in intent. The intent of each nation's Sundance celebrations is to honour

the Wakan Tanka so that the cycles of the universe should continue uninterrupted. Although these groups speak different languages, their world views, as expressed in their sacred rituals and celebrations, echo one another. Language, at least among Aboriginal peoples, is not the sole determinant of their world views.

World views may well reflect each group's unique mixture of experiences, however (Brown, 1970; Colorado, 1988; Battiste, 1986; Johnson, 1992: Hallowell, 1992). Inuit people have many ways to describe the quality of snow, precisely because snow is so important for their survival (Brown, 1970). In order to build igloos and ice shelters, the Inuit need compact snow which can be cut and shaped easily while retaining its form. The language of the Inuit is a reflection of their relationship with nature. However, this distinctive ability of theirs does not preclude the users of other languages from approximating similar distinctions. Euro-Canadians, whose world views emphasize the domination of nature by human beings (Black, 1970; O'Briant, 1974; Attfield, 1983; Suzuki, 1992), are not incapable of making similar distinctions in snow quality. For example, Euro-Canadian cross-country skiers use a number of different waxes to ensure that their skis glide smoothly in a wide variety of snow conditions, which are affected by the age, composition, and temperature of the snow. Although

snow conditions are not described with the same precision or brevity in English as they are in Innuktutuk, Euro-Canadians are able to approximate the same kind of distinctions in snow quality.

This example suggests that world views are not reducible to language. Language may be one of the most important means by which world views are communicated, but it is not the only one. Dance is also used to communicate important aspects of a group's experience. For example, at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre we all join hands during the round dance to confirm our interrelatedness with one another. At the opening of an event like the Olympic Games, dance is often used to welcome the athletes and spectators to the host country and to prepare an atmosphere of friendly competition.

Architecture and spirituality also express a culture's world view. The design of the Initi, the low, dome-like structure in which the sweatlodge ceremony takes place, expresses the Lakota understanding of the universe. The Initi is made of 16 willow saplings which are cut down, stripped of their leaves, and bent over to form a dome eight to ten feet in diameter (Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990). A sacred pit, which holds the heated rocks necessary for the ceremony, is found in the centre of the lodge floor. Blankets and tarpaulins cover the willow frame making the

interior dark. On one side, a low opening covered by a flap of material allows entry and exit. Opposite the opening is a low altar made of the earth, beyond which is the fire which heats the rocks before they are brought into the sweat lodge (Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990. It is my understanding that the willows which form the frame of the Initi represent the four quarters of the universe and all the beings which exist within it (Brown, 1953). Moreover, the sacred, central pit may be the symbolic centre of this microcosmic universe (Brown, 1953). According to Adams (1990), the low altar is representative of Grandmother Earth, the being from whom all natural gifts flow. The sacred fire is symbolic of the strength of Wakan Tanka, the giver of life (Brown, 1953). In the Lakota tradition, the Initi is always oriented toward the east because that is the direction from which spiritual wisdom comes (Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990). The Initi expresses the Lakota belief in the wholeness of the universe and the interconnectedness of all things. Music, art, love, and spirituality, are all important ways in which people express their world views.

At the same time, understanding and describing the world view of another group or culture requires close attention to the meaning of the words and concepts used and the contexts in which they occur. It is an ongoing process of reflection on one's findings, which can be facilitated by

means of dialogue with the research participants. All of my conversations with the research participants were conducted in English because it is the only language in which I am fluent. The difficult job of describing the world views of the Carrier, Ojibwa, Cree, or Dakota peoples regarding nature fell to the research participants, a number of whom spoke English only (Native Friendship Centre, Interview #1, 1992). My inability to speak an Aboriginal language did not mean I was unable to learn more about Aboriginal world views. It did mean, however, that I had to be sensitive to those subtle aspects of communication, such as tone of voice, gesture, facial expression, and body posture which are often overlooked. It also meant that I had to ask questions to gain a greater understanding of what was said. In large part, the participants indicated which aspects of Aboriginal world views they considered important, but sometimes I only discovered the meaning of a particular statement long after I had heard it.

At the beginning of this chapter, I referred to an elder of Tl'azt'en Nations who said to me, "I don't shoot ducks in the springtime because they like to have babies and raise their families just like we do." He said this as we were driving his pick-up truck down towards the band office sometime in the spring of 1990. We had heard the pop of shotguns all day long as hunters on the Tache River tried to

shoot ducks on their annual migration north. His eloquent use of English expressed an assumption common to many Aboriginal world views; that a kinship exists between human beings and non-humans because both possess consciousness, reason, and purpose. The meaning of his statement only became clear years later after I had begun work on this thesis and started to reflect on conversations, books, and articles about Aboriginal world views regarding nature and spirituality.

3. MITAKUYE OYAS'IN HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND SPIRITUALITY

3.1 Introduction

Following my initial discussions with the Aboriginal participants in this research, I was overwhelmed by the scope and complexity of what they had told me. I felt unequal to the task of organizing and interpreting the transcribed interviews because I had little prior knowledge of Aboriginal world views. Before I could write, I had to gain some understanding of them and overcome the limitations of my own thinking. For a Euro-Canadian such as myself, understanding Aboriginal world views becomes an intensely personal challenge. It was sometimes difficult to understand the assumptions or presuppositions underlying a culture completely different from my own. One of the ways in which I tried to expand my knowledge and reach a deeper level of understanding was by reading works written by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors which describe and analyse Aboriginal world views and cultures. This is an acceptable way of gaining knowledge in the Euro-Canadian academic tradition, and the fruits of this investigation appear in chapter two. At the same time, I coupled the

knowledge I gained from books with participation inAboriginal ceremonies. Conversations about my experiences in these ceremonies with the Spiritual Advisor of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre (PGNFC) and the former Director of the Start Program followed. This approach allowed me to engage in my research on both an intellectual and spiritual plane, and thus gain a more complete and personal knowledge of Aboriginal world views.

I begin this chapter by describing the first time I participated in a Dakota "Inipi" or sweatlodge ceremony because it is concrete evidence of my intention to gain a more inclusive understanding of Aboriginal world views. It also allowed me to construct a bridge between the presuppositions underlying Aboriginal cultures and my own. In the same way, my description of this ceremony bridges the abstract, theoretical examination of Aboriginal world views found in chapter two with the experiential knowledge of the research participants. My participation in "Inipi" also helped me to recognize more clearly the significance of their statements by placing them in a broader context that gives significance to their lives. "Inipi" is also important to this thesis because it exemplifies many of the principles at the root of Aboriginal world views regarding nature and spirituality. Through this ceremony, the Dakota create a microcosm of the universe and affirm the unity of

all beings who inhabit the world, a belief central to many Aboriginal world views.Moreover, the meaning of "Mitakuye Oyas'in" as the relatedness of everything in the universe became clearer to me during this ceremony.

Following my description of "Inipi", I describe and analyse my conversations with both the staff and students of Project Refocus and with other members of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. Relevant sections of dialogue will be provided and their examination will form the heart of my description of the participants' world views. Finally, the chapter will end with a brief conclusion in which I draw together certain aspects of the experiences which the participants shared with me.

3.2 Inipi

"Inipi" is the rite of purification that prepares the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples for important endeavours like the vision quest, Sundance, and hunt (Brown, 1991; Brown, 1953; Hassrick, 1964; Adams, 1990). The Oyate perform this sacred ceremony in order to approach these endeavours in a state of spiritual, mental, and physical readiness; their minds, bodies, and spirits cleansed of impurities which could jeopardize their success. Participants form an intimate connection with each other and

the rest of the universe. Through prayer, meditation, and sacrifice, the unity of all life is honoured and affirmed.

In "Inipi", the participants purify themselves, celebrate the interconnectedness of all beings, and reaffirm their belief in Wakan Tanka, a group of spiritually powerful beings who, working collectively, embody the harmony of the universe (Suzuki, 1992; DeMallie, 1984; Walker, 1980; Adams, 1990). The materials used in the rite of purification comprise the four elements of the universe namely: earth, wind, fire, and water (Brown, 1953; Spiritual Advisor, 1994). The ceremony takes place in a low, dome-like structure called an "Initi" which consists of a framework of willow saplings covered with blankets and tarpaulins (Brown, 1953; Spiritual Advisor, 1994). The blankets and tarpaulins darken the interior of the "Initi" and concentrate the steam which is an essential part of the rite. Two elements, fire and wind, are used to heat rocks taken from a third element, the earth. The heated rocks are placed in a pit dug in the centre of the "Initi". Water, the fourth element, is poured on the rocks flooding the sweatlodge with steam which purifies the mind, body, and spirit. All four elements are used so that the "Inipi" and other ceremonies should maintain their spiritual strength (Spiritual Advisor, Fieldnotes, February 23, 1994).

On a warm winter's evening in February, 1994, I attended an "Inipi" held on the banks of the Nechako River. It was sunset when I arrived, and the rocks which would heat the "Initi" or sweatlodge were baking in a large fire. The fire had been built in a sacred manner: piles of rocks had been put at the north, south, east, and west of a stick tipi; logs had been placed on this structure to form a larger tipi, and prayers had been said before the fire was lit (Brown, 1953). There were only male participants at this ceremony. Although women also participate in "Inipi", men and women did not sweat in the same "Initi" until recent times (McGaa, 1990).[1] The other men and I gazed into the fire and said little to one another. I put my offering of tobacco on the little earthen altar that stood between the fire and the "Initi". We prepared ourselves to enter it by changing into gym shorts and removing our jewelry. By entering the "Initi", we were symbolically re-entering the womb of our common mother, the Earth. Our re-entry into Mother Earth's womb had to be performed humbly and in the same naked state of our human birth. According to Dakota beliefs, pride in our clothing or material possessions is superfluous because we are all equal before Wakan Tanka. Material possessions also draw us to the outward, physical aspects of reality and interfere with our efforts to reach the underlying, spiritual reality (Adams, 1990).

The other men and I crawled into the "Initi" in a sun-wise direction around the central pit and found our places on the floor strewn with cedar bows. As we sat there in silence and waited for the ceremony to start, I began to get dizzy and confused. The previous hours of the day no longer existed; time melted away, and I was confronted by elemental darkness. Lightheaded, I leant against the wall of the "Initi" for support. To maintain my control, I gripped a willow stick and massaged a knot on it with my thumb. One of the men used a pair of deer antlers to bring in six red-hot rocks which were placed in the central pit.

As each rock was brought in and placed in the pit, our leader's assistant sprinkled some powder over it. The individual speckles of powder glowed like miniature stars, and some flew up into the air where they jitterbugged until burning out. Looking at the red glow of the rocks and all the little lights twinkling in the blackness made me feel more disoriented. I felt weak and had the urge to laugh. I concentrated on the rocks as they were positioned in the pit, watching the sparks from the powder. The rocks represented the four directions, the sky, and the earth. After all the rocks had been arranged, a bucket of water was held over the pit and passed around its circumference four times in a sun-wise direction. All the elements of the universe were now present in the "Initi" (Brown, 1953).

Noting ethnographic details like this helped control my anxiety; the impulse to leave was very strong.

Fear is a common reaction among those who take part in "Inipi" for the first time; McGaa (1990) and the Spiritual Advisor of the PGNFC (personal communication, 1995) believe it to be the result of the darkness and heat inside the "Initi". The former Director of the Start Program believes that my fear was the result my of soul's interaction with the spirit world. She maintains that the spirits were evaluating my reasons for being at the ceremony and testing my ability to stay the full four rounds (Former Director Start Program, personal communication, 1995). In any case, I managed to stay, and the door leading into the "Initi" closed leaving nothing but silence and the rocks glowing in the darkness.

This first round of "Inipi" was dedicated to our common mother, the Earth and to the earth, wind, fire, and water, the elements from which the universe is formed (Spiritual Advisor, 1994). After tightening his drum over the heated rocks, our leader began to sing in Lakota. The sound of the drum and the singing were loud and easily filled the small space; soon the other men began to join in with him. I rocked my body to the cadence of the drum and sang in similar tones even though I had no idea of the song's meaning. I was conscious only of trying to match my voice

with those of the others, and how good it felt to sing in this way. On subsequent occasions, I learnt that singing in this way was one method of diverting my attention from the searing heat.

When the singing ended, our leader began to say a prayer for Mother Earth in English. He asked us to consider how well Mother Earth cared for us and how we had a responsibility to care for her in return. The prayers ended with the words, "Mitakuye Oyas'in" or "All My Relations" (Spiritual Advisor, personal communication, April 26, 1996), affirming our connectedness with the other aspects of the universe. After our leader had finished his prayers, he invited the person on his left to offer his prayers to Mother Earth. Following a sun-wise direction, we offered our prayers in turn until the person to the right of the leader had finished speaking, and the cycle of prayer was complete.

It was now quite hot in the "Initi", and I was sweating freely when a cedar whisk was used to throw water on the rocks. The low roof caught the steam, making it hard for me to breathe. The steam was intensely hot, and after taking short, painful gasps for a couple of minutes, I found relief by lying on the floor. As I lay quietly on the floor, others around me prayed, whooped, or sat quietly. After the time of contemplation was past, a few people loudly

proclaimed "Mitakuye Oyas'in", the door was opened, and our leader gave us permission to get up and go outside. I left quickly and walked down to the river to cool myself; the cool air had little effect on me.

Going back into the "Initi" for the second round was much easier because I was becoming familiar with my companions and the ceremony. Four more rocks were brought in and added to those left over from the first round. Again, powder was sprinkled over the glowing rocks while singers tightened their drums by heating them over the pit. As this round was dedicated to all the feminine aspects of the universe, we were encouraged to contemplate the gifts of our human and non-human sisters. The drumming began again, and soon everyone was singing. It was very hot in the "Initi", and singing helped reduce my discomfort. One of my companions said that this was always the hottest round (Project Start, 1994). After the singing and drumming stopped, our leader suggested that we should make peace with the women in our lives and to consider the importance of feminine beings. When we had all offered our prayers for the feminine, water was thrown once more onto the rocks. I was able to withstand the steam for a longer period of time before curling up in a ball on the floor.

During the long break between the second and third round, a pipe ceremony was performed. The pipe ceremony,

like the "Inipi", is one of the seven sacred rites of the Lakota, often forming part of other holy ceremonies like the Sundance or vision quest. White Buffalo Calf Woman gave the first sacred pipe to the Lakota to help them communicate to Wakan Tanka (McGaa, 1990; Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990). The stone bowl of the pipe represents the totality of the universe; the wooden pipestem represents the spiritual and physical connection between the smoker and the rest of universe. The grains of tobacco are symbolic of all human and non-human beings. When the pipe is lit, the smoke which leaves it and the smokers' mouths is like a prayer sent skyward to Wakan Tanka (McGaa, 1990; Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990). The pipe ceremony gave us a chance to cool our overheated bodies and to spend time in quiet contemplation.

We were halfway through "Inipi", and I would have been very happy to finish the ceremony then as I was tired and hungry. McGaa (1990) describes quite accurately the four rounds of "Inipi" as the four endurances. I faced a dilemma: spending long periods of time in the hot "Initi" was becoming a trial of my patience and fortitude, but leaving it would break my connection with the others and result in a loss of self-respect. Our leader encouraged me by saying that all the others in the group were suffering along with me. He gave me the strength to endure the last two rounds of the "Inipi".

The third and fourth rounds followed a similar pattern to the first two. The third round was dedicated to men and all the male aspects of the universe. The fourth round has been termed the "selfish" (Former Director Start Program, personal communication, 1995) or "sacrificing" round (Spiritual Advisor, 1994). In this round, we gave thanks for our gifts and begged for guidance and mercy. The period of contemplation following this round seemed to last for the longest time and involved a great deal of individual prayer. The end of this period of contemplation marked the culmination of the "Inipi". After the fourth round, we emerged refreshed, having been cleansed spiritually and physically of our impurities. Once we were all outside, the earnest attitudes found in the "Initi" were replaced with jokes and laughter as we dressed for the trip home. Later, as I sat eating my supper, I felt a depth of happiness I had not felt in years.

The efforts we made to promote and maintain harmonious relationships with Wakan Tanka, and the other human and non-human beings of the universe remain the most significant aspects of "Inipi" for me. The steam, the union of the four elements: earth, wind, fire, and water, were all mingled with our sweat. This vapor became our physical and spiritual connection to Wakan Tanka (Brown, 1987; McGaa, 1990). Together, we had disciplined our minds, bodies, and

spirits through prayer and submission to the four endurances (McGaa, 1990). A community based on shared sacrifice had been formed, and through prayer and meditation we had become more fully aware of the interdependence of the universe. It is for this reason that "Mitakuye Oyas'in: All my relations" has been chosen for the title of this chapter. This statement constitutes the central core of Aboriginal world views regarding harmonious relationships among all things and spirituality.

3.3 Participant Profile and Description of Conversations

The majority of my conversations with research participants took place at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre, located in the downtown core of Prince George, BC. The centre is a major social service agency and in 1996 employed approximately eighty part-time and full-time staff. The PGNFC operates a men's hostel, a shelter for street kids, a healing centre, an employment office, the Native Learning Centre, and the Headstart Program for children of pre-school age. All the programs are oriented towards fulfilling the needs of Aboriginal people living in Prince George, although a considerable number of non-Aboriginal people also use its services.

The leader of the "Inipi", and one of my key research participants, is the Spiritual Advisor of the Prince George

Native Friendship Centre. A Dakota man of about fifty years old, he continues to participate actively in the Sundance ceremony held every year in Merrit. I appreciate his gentle sense of humour, and the effort he made to make me feel comfortable at my first "Inipi". The other key research participant is the former director of the Start Program. She is a Saulteaux/Ojibwe woman from Manitoba; the conversations that we have had have encouraged me to think beyond the limitations of my world view. Both individuals grew up in rural Manitoba; much of their early learning came from observing nature and listening to their elders. They have given generously of their time by imparting some of their understanding of Aboriginal world views and by reading over my work to make sure I got it right.

Two research participants, who also made a significant contribution to this research, were counsellors attached to the employment office. One is a Saulteaux man of approximately thirty-five years of age who has since been promoted and is now the Director of Employment. He grew up in the Core, a low income neighbourhood in Winnipeg, Manitoba; however, he maintained his ties to his Aboriginal heritage through his mother and her family. In 1992, he shared an office with another employment counsellor, a Saulteaux/Ojibwa woman in her forties who also agreed to become a research participant. She grew up in rural

Manitoba and had gained personal knowledge of her people's spiritual beliefs by witnessing or participating in several sacred ceremonies.

The other research participants were drawn from the staff and students of Project Refocus, an employment preparation program for those with few job skills, a poor work record, or other employment barriers. Many were also upgrading their level of education. The participants were Aboriginal men and women, most of whom ranged in age from twenty to thirty-five. A slight majority of the participants were women, who had lived much of their lives in urban settings, having had only minimal exposure to rural life. They identified themselves as belonging to a number of Aboriginal groups, though most indicated that they were of Carrier or Cree ancestry. The participants were passionately concerned about the development of their respective languages and cultures. Many noted the importance of gaining wisdom and knowledge from Aboriginal elders; some indicated that they wanted to attain greater levels of fluency in an Aboriginal language. I appreciated the time the students took from their busy schedules to share their knowledge of Aboriginal world views in their conversations with me.

Initially, the conversations that I had with all research participants were very wide ranging. With little

idea of what comprised Aboriginal world views, I only began to narrow down my field of investigation once the first few interviews were complete. In order to determine the central core of Aboriginal world views, I asked questions like:

> I have an idea there is a lot about Native culture that would be good for all of us to learn. What would those things be? (Author, Native Friendship Centre Interview #1)

Sometimes, I would pose statements made by one group of research participants so that others could respond to them. For example,

> .....some of the students over there (Project Refocus) were saying that when their folks or someone like this went into the bush and they took something from a tree, they would leave some tobacco or something like that. And it was this whole idea of giving something back to nature. Author, Native Friendship Centre Interview #1)

At other times, I would ask for an explanation about some aspect of Aboriginal life that I had noticed:

> One thing I am always amazed at is whenever you go onto a reserve, whenever, often times you go onto a reserve and it's d e a d s i l e n c e particularly on winter's evenings. (Author, Start Program, Interview #1)

Although the information I received through the interviews was valuable, my most significant learning occurred as a result of my ongoing relationship with the Spiritual Advisor of PGNFC and the former Director of the Start Program. The knowledge that they shared with me in large part gave direction to my ongoing inquiry into the characteristics of Aboriginal world views regarding nature and spirituality.

3.4 Harmonious Relationships

A common theme running throughout all my discussions with the research participants was that human beings should develop harmonious relationships both with one another and the non-human aspects of nature. The theme of harmonious relationships includes the kinship of all human and non-human beings as integral parts of nature. Many Aboriginal people consider themselves to be united to plants, animals, birds, fish, and other people through bonds of reciprocity and sharing. Two participants stated that Aboriginal families share food, tools, and materials amongst themselves. For one woman:

> Whatever you had you always shared whatever; sometimes it wasn't very much but you always shared whatever you had with someone who had less. And that was all it was just caring and sharing and helping other people out.

Sharing also played a significant role in the life of a man who had grown up in an urban area:

> With the city the same thing. My uncles if they, if they shot a moose or something we always get meat. They always send us. The first thing that they do, they take that and they split it with their family so everyone had food.

This participant also indicated that the leaders of Aboriginal communities, in particular, are expected to ensure that all people get an adequate share of what they need to survive:

> From what I know of the elders, the elders used to be actually the first ones to share. They

> would make sure that everyone got their share first. Same as with the chief; he would make sure everyone got their share and then and only then would he take his share. The chief should be the poorest one.

One female participant thought that the value Aboriginal peoples placed on sharing allowed Europeans to dominate North America:

> I think a lot of thought that, that when they were signing treaties and stuff; they thought it was a way of sharing, and they didn't realize that they were giving up their land; that they would never have this land back. They thought they were just sharing with white people.

Sharing food and land has both practical and spiritual significance for Aboriginal peoples. Sharing helps ensure the physical survival of the group by guaranteeing that all group members have equal access to common resources. Sharing also has spiritual significance because it is a reaffirmation of the sacred bonds which link humans and non-humans. Hoarding food or other material things is an insult to those non-humans whose lives may have been destroyed or altered so that humans could survive. The presents of moose meat mentioned in the second quotation above are examples of Aboriginal beliefs that have been successfully transplanted to urban environments. Sharing and the relationship which that action represents are a continuing feature of Aboriginal world views despite the pervasive influence of non-Aboriginal culture.

Just as Aboriginal peoples share amongst themselves and with other peoples, so, too, are they expected to share with their non-human kin. As a practical example of this belief, humans should leave some berries on the bush after they have finished berry picking so that bears and birds get enough food for the winter as well. Two participants, a Carrier and a Talhtan, whose words were not recorded, best illustrated this point when they stated that their people throw the intestines of cleaned fish back into the water for other fish and the birds to consume (Fieldnotes, June 22, 1992). By this simple action, both the Carrier and the Talhtan peoples ensure the survival of other species by sharing food with them. The effects of the destruction of one fish's life are ameliorated by the return of part of that fish's body to nature.

The balanced relationship between human beings and the processes of nature can take an even more active form. One participant stated that in times past the Carrier people used to set fires in the forest in order to burn away the underbrush (Project Start, Interview #2; Dickason, 1992). The fires, which occurred early in the spring, encouraged new growth which in turn provided more forage for animals such as moose and deer. These small scale fires helped prevent larger ones later in the summer which could be far more destructive. Even in death, the symbiotic relationship

between Aboriginal peoples and the processes of nature continues. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Ojibwe placed their dead in trees so that the corpses would decompose quickly, nourishing the ground below them and hence future generations (Project Start, Fieldnotes, October, 1995). Like the fish, the bodies of the Ojibwe dead helped ensure the survival of plants and animals for the benefit of all aspects of the natural world. All beings must work in harmony so that the cyclical pattern of birth, death, and rebirth can continue.

Aboriginal world views are also based on the idea that some aspects of nature depend on others for their survival. This was most strongly expressed by one female participant who stated that relationships between all living things could be described in the following terms:

> .....according to a lot of the earth way people or Native people, the Creator is first and then the earth, and then the plants, minerals, animals, and on the lowest rung of the ladder are human beings....All this other stuff is way more important than us beings.....If it wasn't for the animals, if it wasn't for the plants, if it wasn't for the minerals, where would we be? We wouldn't be alive.

This hierarchical ordering of living beings supports the Aboriginal belief that all aspects of life are a harmonious community of different beings. Furthermore, it suggests that the influence and importance of any aspect of nature is related to its position within the order. Human

beings depend on animals, plants, minerals, the earth, and the Creator for their survival, and if they are to survive, humans are required to exist in harmony with these other aspects of nature. Similarly, animals depend on those entities above them in the order, like plants, for their survival. This hierarchical view is not inconsistent with the cyclical conception of nature expressed in the literature; it simply underlines the fact that human beings are dependent on nature. Although they are an integral part of the natural cycle, human beings depend on animals, plants, and minerals far more than those entities depend on them.

The interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with all aspects of nature were also mentioned by the research participants from Project Refocus. One Cree-Métis participant recalled that his grandfather told him that if he needed a branch from a tree, he should only take one so that the tree would not die. His grandfather also said that hunters should be very careful to leave a healthy population of animals for the next year. A Carrier woman added that her father only took birch bark to be used in baskets from halfway around the tree so that it would survive (Fieldnotes, June 22, 1992). Aboriginal peoples recognize that living in harmony with nature requires human beings to respect the lives of plants

and animals by using their gifts sparingly. Living in harmony with nature also demands that human beings take only enough to satisfy their needs, so that other beings continue to exist.

The majority of the research participants also believed that human beings should also leave a gift for the plant or animal whose life they had taken or altered to show their gratitude. One woman said:

> When I used to pick medicines for my Grandmothers, the herbs and stuff like that you know, we were always taught to leave a gift. Because we sometimes we literally had to kill a plant in order to take it. So we had to offer a gift, and we had to offer prayers of thankfulness and forgiveness to that plant because that plant had a life and we were killing it in order to survive ourselves. And that's how Native people view the environment.

This participant is highly conscious of the effect of taking a few leaves or some roots has for her plant relatives. She only undertakes actions which could injure or kill a plant after considering her need for it, and presents a gift and prayers expressing her thankfulness and regret.

Three participants said that, if they took something from nature, it was proper for them to leave a few grains of tobacco behind as a token of their thanks (Project Refocus, Interview #1), and a fourth concurred with them (Native Friendship Centre, Interview #1). Greater favours, such as requesting spiritual intervention in choosing a name, require a more generous gift of tobacco. During one

particularly challenging period in her life, one woman's grandmother decided to give her a sacred name:

> And so she phoned my aunt and said, "Tell.....we're going to have a ceremony to give her an Indian name." So they had a ceremony and she gave me an Indian name, the spirits told her my name should be ...And for that I was told to send her a pouch of tobacco and some green cloth and some white cloth to hang up on a tree outside to offer to the spirits who gave me that name.

This quotation indicates that the woman in question considers the natural world to be inhabited by spiritual entities. These spirits can be of assistance to human beings, but in return humans are obligated to present them with tangible evidence of their gratitude. Once a gift of tobacco is offered, those nutritional, medicinal, or spiritual qualities of whatever is of greatest benefit to the person in question are passed on (Project Start, Interview #2).

Several of the principles common to Aboriginal world views regarding nature are implied by these stories. Perhaps the most obvious example is that plants and animals are considered to be conscious, spiritual beings whose gifts must be used sparingly and with respect. Human beings are dependent on the goodwill and generosity of plants and animals and are obligated to give thanks and ask forgiveness of those whose lives they have ended or altered. Many Aboriginal people believe that ingratitude, greed, or

wastefulness will be sensed by these beings who may deny themselves to the individual or group in the future. For example, a hunter who kills a deer but is not grateful for the gift of that deer's life may find that other deer do not allow themselves to be killed by him. By virtue of their dependence, human beings are obligated to consider the plants and animals as full persons.

As full persons, the non-humans like plants, animals, lakes and rivers are capable teachers of their human cousins. According to one participant, nature was considered to be the best teacher by his father's and grandfather's generation. For example, young people were sometimes asked to sit beside a brook and listen to what it had to say (Spiritual Advisor, Fieldnotes, February 23, 1994). The request to sit by the brook demonstrates that natural beings have the ability to impart wisdom to their human cousins. Such a request gives young people the opportunity to observe not only the stream but also the harmonious coexistence of the animals, birds, fish, and plants who inhabit the area around it. Through observation and experience, the young person becomes conscious of the harmonious processes which characterize nature and learns that contemplation is important as the basis of Aboriginal wisdom. As one participant put it, "during a silent moment

is when you hear the Creator, like the prayers in the wind, in a leaf."

3.5 Spirituality

For many Aboriginal people, harmonious coexistence with other natural beings is both a practical concern which ensures physical survival and a reflection of deeply held spiritual beliefs. Many of the participants thought that non-humans possessed spiritual qualities (Native Friendship Centre, Interview #1; Spiritual Advisor, Interview 31; Spiritual Advisor, Fieldnotes, March 26, 1995). One woman put it this way:

> We're all equal in terms of being sacred beings because we're all created the same way. Rocks, plants, animals, they're all sacred beings because they're all created from the same source.

The universe is considered to be a spiritual collection of human and non-human beings working in harmonious cooperation.

Humans must always treat the spiritual aspects of nature with caution and respect because it is within their capability to injure or assist people. For example, women are both spiritually vulnerable and powerful while they are menstruating. Quoting a document found in Appendix 3, one woman stated:

> It is against the Creator's laws to walk, hike, swim or bathe in Nature or have sex while they're on their menses or their moontime. Nature

> is purifying the women mentally, physically, and spiritually. As a consequence, toxins and negative energy are being discharged, and it can contaminate others and Nature. By the same token the women are being replenished with positive, spiritual power. She should therefore isolate herself, centre herself with the cosmic forces and not disperse her powers socially, physically, mentally, or spiritually.

Menstruating women exist in a state of spiritual potency because they are temporarily ridding themselves of their ability to create life while preparing for the possibility of creating life once again. This state of potential can be quite harmful to men who can be affected negatively by the presence of menstruating women. Medicine men, especially when engaged in a spiritual ceremony such as a sweatlodge, are particularly vulnerable to menstruating women. Their openness to the spiritual dimensions of nature leave medicine men susceptible to their powerful and possibly negative spiritual potential (Start, Interview #1).

Despite the ambivalent personality of some of the spiritual dimensions of nature, a number of the participants in this research believe that the non-human aspects of nature offer human beings their greatest source of spiritual support. For example, in one of the quotes in the previous section, spiritual beings were contacted to provide the inspiration for an Indian name. Such a name describes the core of the holder's being and gives that person an ideal to emulate (Adams, 1990). Similarly, the sweatlodge ceremony

described at the beginning of this chapter offers spiritual assistance to those who wish to accept it. The constituent elements of creation: stone, air, fire, and water are all present in the sweatlodge to heal and purify the human participants. In doing so, they develop a spiritual relationship with the other aspects of nature throughfocussed prayer and meditation and become more receptive to their spiritual influences.

Animals are also considered to be spiritual beings who will watch over and protect the humans for whom they have a special affinity. As one woman stated:

> They don't pray to it (the animal). It's just an animal that will watch over them and gives them strength. They don't kill it and they wouldn't go out and hunt it for its fur or anything else like that.

The relationship between a human being and his spirit helper is unique and often very private. One person, who never became a research participant, told me stories of her grandfather's spirit helper on the condition that I did not record them in my thesis.

However, after reading a draft of this thesis, another male participant wrote down a story about a spirit helper from his grandmother, and gave it to me for inclusion here. I feel very privileged to have his permission to reproduce it here:

Grizzly Bear Spirit Helper

(The words in parentheses are mine and were included for the purposes of clarification only.)

A long time ago I was told there was this Lakota warrior who got separated from his war party. So they say he headed for home but before he got far the Crow war party was right behind him. He was out numbered and his pony was tiring fast. He looked around quickly and seen a hill and rocks in a distance so he headed in that direction and thinking this is where he was going to make his last stand and die in honour. He rode up the hill and quickly dismounted and got behind some rocks, not noticing the den behind him. The Crow war party was coming up the hill fast. The Lakota Warrior started his Death Song, and he was going to take as many as he can with him. Just as the enemies were all most on top of him, he heard some thing behind him. To his surprise there was a big grizzly bear crawling out from the den. They say it stood on his hind feet and roared and looked at the Lone warrior and then went after the crow war party when they saw this big grizzly coming down the (hill) roaring and swatting at them and knocking them off their horses and killing some of them with his mighty paws. The crow war party took off as fast as they could. Some had to run and others rode double because some of them were hurt pretty (badly). And when the bear had chased the war party off they said he came back to his den and stood on his hind legs and spoke to the warrior and crawled back into his den. The Lakota warrior got on his horse and rode back to his camp. And that evening he gathered all the medicine men + women and elders for a Victory Dance + Feast. And then he told his story to the people. One very wise old man told him what he had to do the next day. He told that he was to make an offering (to) the Great Grizzly Bear. He had to get six young puppies and cut them open and lay them out on a big tree bark and get the fine down from an Eagle and put this around the puppies and offer this (to) the Bear, which he did. They say he went back to the same place and made his prayers and called the bear. And sure enough the bear came out and done a dance on his hind legs and accepted the offering. He was told by the wise old man that this was the same thing that he

> had to do every year at the same time for as long as he lived. They say this warrior knew no fear after that, he would go off by himself for days and nights. And the Grizzly Bear Spirit would always travel with him and he lived to be a very old man. That's the way it is, All my relations Mitakuye Oyas'in (Spiritual Advisor, Fieldnotes, April 26, 1993)

The richness of this story continues to enlighten me in many ways with regard to several key points about several key points about the relationship between human beings and their spirit helpers. First of all, it clearly shows that non-human beings decide which humans are worthy or ready for their help. In this narrative, the Lakota warrior had proven his merit by preparing himself for the certainty of death in battle with his enemies. It was only after the Lakota man acted with great courage that the grizzly bear emerged from his den to attack the Crow warriors. Second, a human being must fulfill certain obligations to her spirit helper as part of their ongoing relationship. For some Aboriginal people, this amounts to a promise not to harm or hunt that particular animal (see quote on page 23). In this case, the Lakota warrior was obligated to perform a sacred ritual every year for the rest of his life. By surrounding six puppy carcasses with eagle down and offering them to the bear, the warrior was thanking the grizzly for its earlier generosity and maintaining their ongoing relationship. Had he ignored his obligation to the grizzly bear, the Lakota warrior's disloyalty could have resulted in severe illness

or death (Spiritual Advisor, Personal communication, June 24, 1996). A third important point illustrated by this story is that spirit helpers offer human beings both physical and spiritual assistance. For example, the grizzly bear spirit helper aided the Lakota warrior by decimating the Crow war party. The grizzly also transferred his spiritual gifts to the human. After the grizzly bear became the warrior's spirit helper, he became as courageous as the grizzly and took on his robust health and character.

All people have spirit helpers although only a few people become aware of their spirit helpers through their continual presence in dreams or visions (Spiritual Advisor, Interview #1). People who become aware of their spirit helpers often take on some of the characteristics of the animals they represent. For example, if a person has a buffalo spirit helper, she will incorporate some of the aspects of the buffalo's character into her own. Sometimes spirit helpers inform individuals of their destiny or give them messages to pass on to other people. In Black Elk's vision (see Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks, 1932), messages from spirit helpers were intended to influence the lives of Black Elk and his people. According to the Spiritual Advisor of the PGNFC, the Oyate have survived because they have had spirit helpers to protect and guide them through the turbulent years following the arrival of Europeans

(Spiritual Advisor, Interview #1). Other tribes also have spirit helpers; the Cree, for example are watched over by the Bear spirit (Native Friendship Centre, Interview #1).

Two women who told me about the existence of spirit helpers also recognized that the spiritual dimensions of nature could be invoked to do harm to other people. In the words of one:

> Yes, there are some people who wish you bad things.....like a lot of it has to, used to do with Powwow celebrations where there are so many dancers competing for a certain prize. And if a person wanted to win really badly, they could go to a medicine person and say, "Well I want this person to lose or something." And maybe all of a sudden this person is dancing and they lose their step or else a part of their outfit falls off or their knees swell up so bad that they can't dance or your hand might ache or something physical will happen to you on that day so that they can't compete. That's a form of persecution to have on another person.

Another, quoting and interpreting a document found in Appendix 3, said:

> It is against the Creator's laws to use witchcraft or to make bad prayers, bad thoughts, bad wishes, or evil thoughts against others. Negative powers contaminate our soul and weaken our health. Abuse of powers causes sickness to the violator.

Both participants recognize that human beings are able to exercise free will by employing their spiritual gifts to harm others. They also recognize that using one's gifts to injure someone else is immoral, whether the purpose is self-aggrandizement, as in the first quotation, or an expression of hatred or revenge as in the second. However, only the

second participant believes that those who misuse their gifts will be punished in turn by the spirits. Further on in the interview, this participant indicated that she knew of a family who had persecuted others through witchcraft and had caused one woman to die of cancer. Family members had been punished by the spirits for their actions, and now only one remained alive (Start Program, Interview #2).

Some Aboriginal peoples also believe that, like animals, plants and herbs such as sweetgrass, sage, and tobacco possess special spiritual qualities. For example, they are valued for their ability to cleanse and purify. Sage and sweetgrass can be used to cleanse and purify both the human participants and the sacred pipe used in a pipe ceremony:

> So we smudge our eyes and our senses *with* (my italics) sweetgrass or sage eh. It's (the pipe) taken apart and smudged again....to cleanse it for future use.....And they say when we smoke the pipe, our minds should be, should be good eh.....They should be clean. So that's why the pipe carrier will smudge the pipe in sweetgrass.

Pipe carriers, who are allowed to possess a sacred pipe used to communicate with the Wakan Tanka, prepare the minds, bodies, and spirits of those who would take part in the pipe ceremony. This ritual purification is accomplished with sweetgrass and/or sage, so the pipe will retain its spiritual potency, and the smokers will be in a humble and pure state of mind. After the pipe ceremony is completed,

the pipe will be disassembled and its constituent parts cleansed with a mixture of sage and sweetgrass so that any impure thoughts the smokers may have had during the ceremony will be removed.

Sage and sweetgrass are also used to purify buildings and their occupants. Some years after my initial fieldwork was complete, I began working at the Native Learning Centre in Prince George. There I found that sage was used quite frequently to infuse the buildings, staff, and students with beneficial spirits and influences. Sweetgrass, on the other hand, removes harmful spirits and influences. After one particularly trying week in which the staff had attempted to intervene with an extremely angry and troubled student, my program manager used sage and sweetgrass to purify the room in which many of the discussions regarding that person had been held. The sage/sweetgrass smudge was used to cleanse the room of hurtful thoughts or emotions which may have been present, so that the staff could continue its work in a spiritual manner which would promote good relationships among all people. Nonetheless, sweetgrass and sage are plants of exceptional spiritual potential and must be used reverently. People under the influence of drugs or alcohol should not use these plants for, to do so, would invite retribution from the spirits (Project Start, Interview #1).

Tobacco is also a sacred plant to a number of Aboriginal peoples including the Cree, the Saulteaux, the Ojibwe, and the Lakota (Start, Interview #1, Adams, 1990; Brown, 1953; Native Friendship Centre, Interview #1; Spiritual Advisor, Interview #1; Project Refocus, Interview #1). When it is burned as part of a spiritual rite, tobacco smoke forms the medium of prayer and carries the thoughts and prayers of the petitioner to the Wakan Tanka (Adams, 1990, Brown, 1953; Spiritual Advisor, Interview #1). Because of its spiritual potency, gifts of tobacco are given to human or non-human beings who have been of assistance. For example, Saulteaux medicine men and women give tobacco to the spirits in order to thank them for providing a name to a relative or initiating a new member into the tribe (Native Friendship Centre, Interview #1). Similarly, human beings give gifts of tobacco to plants of animals whose lives they have altered or destroyed (Project Refocus, Interview #1).

The extent to which Aboriginal peoples develop a balanced relationship with the cyclical processes of the natural world can be seen in their religious ceremonies. For some Aboriginal peoples, the Sacred Hoop or Medicine Wheel represents the core of their understandings of nature because it is symbolic of the interrelation of all beings and the continual recurrence of natural processes. The

metaphors used by these peoples to explain their spirituality and the understanding of nature which underlies it stem from the circle. Following a sunwise or clockwise direction, the circular earth can be divided into the four directions: east, south, west, and north. These cardinal directions symbolise important events in the lives of all beings and in the processes of nature (Appendix 3).

The cyclical character of the seasons of the year and the physical existence of all beings, has meant that many Aboriginal peoples, like the Lakota and the Cree, have chosen the circle to be the primary form of their spiritual ceremonies. The circle binds the participants more closely to nature by reminding them of its cyclical character and the interrelatedness of all beings. The words of one female participant demonstrates the importance of the circle in the Raindance:

> All I know is like when I used to go to it (the Raindance), they had a ceremony, a pipe ceremony and the people that fasted they made a lodge out of wood, and they made them a circle. And they made each separate little cubicle. And each person would stand in their own little cubicle and then they would chant and they would blow the whistle. And just do that basically off and on while the sacred medicine man or whatever would sit in the middle.....

A male participant made reference to the circle in his description of the pipe ceremony:

> That's their way (the pipe ceremony) of communicating to, to the Great Spirit, to the Grandfathers and our ancestors. And that's the

> way they, and we used to sit in a circle and for, to do the pipe ceremony, sundance too. The pipe is smoked like I said in the time of healing, sadness, happiness. It's smoked for the unity of the people today. Today so they come back to help each other and to pray for each other and to pray for all people. The time of mourning, the time to share stories and just be together again. That's the way I understand it. The pipe goes around clockwise and it goes around four times.....There again we pray for someone who is sick, basically praying for your family and goodwill. These sorts of things. We pass the pipe around and each time its passed to you, you cleanse your body with the smoke. And y o u follow your actions and when you smoke you think of these things. Usually when they start, he (the pipe carrier) points the pipe to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west. And what I think that maybe that is doing is that with the sun that comes it goes around that way.

Participants in pipe ceremonies follow these circular patterns in order to attune themselves to nature. During a pipe ceremony, the pipe is passed four times around a circle of men in a sunwise direction so that the thoughts and prayers of the participants are in harmony with nature (Spiritual Advisor, Interview #1; Native Friendship Centre, Interview #1). Similarly, the participants mentioned in the sweatlodge ceremony at the beginning of this chapter enter and exit the sweatlodge by crawling sunwise around a central pit. The circle is a metaphor for the interconnectedness of all things and the all encompassing influence of the Wakan Tanka (Brown, 1953).

The concept "Wakan Tanka" and the spiritual understandings which it implies are distinctly Lakota and

not necessarily the same as those of other Aboriginal peoples. Only the Dakota research participant used this term to describe his understanding of the harmony and relatedness of nature. When I asked him about his understanding of the term "Wakan Tanka", he paused briefly, directed his gaze to the cutbanks and mountains visible from his office window, and answered, "Everything out there." (Spiritual Advisor, Fieldnotes, March 28, 1995). He went on further to explain that all beings, the rocks, the insects, the trees, and the animals, are an inseparable part of Wakan Tanka. The physical and spiritual aspects of nature are interconnected and are considered to be a spiritual whole called "Wakan Tanka" (Spiritual Advisor, Fieldnotes, March 28, 1995). He further noted that humans should try to live in harmony with nature.

The Spiritual Advisor's explanation of "Wakan Tanka" is similar to those given by Little Wound and Good Seat, two respondents in J.R. Walker's book Lakota Belief and Ritual (1980). Both Little Wound and Good Seat believe that "Wakan Tanka" are composed of all active beings in the universe. Entities such as rocks, streams, lakes, animals, and plants are all considered active participants who interact with one another to form an inseparable whole. Moreover, for Little Wound, human beings fulfilled a minor role in "Wakan Tanka" and had to live harmoniously with the other aspects of

nature. A more thorough explanation of "Wakan Tanka" is contained in chapter two.

3.6 Conclusion

The knowledge the participants in this research so generously shared with me form the basis of my understanding of Aboriginal world views regarding nature and spirituality. A key element in these world views is the belief that humans and non-humans are interrelated and together form the natural world. This is expressed in the Dakota phrase "Mitakuye Oyas'in" which means literally "All my relations". The non-human aspects of nature, stones, lakes, streams, fish, animals, plants, and insects, are considered to be full persons capable of rational thought and volition and possessing spiritual qualities. For some Aboriginal people, it is very important to develop and maintain a fluid, dynamic, and balanced relationship with all other beings. Speaking to a group of teenaged students, one female participantsaid, "That's what you're here for, ultimately, in order to get balanced."

The efforts Aboriginal peoples make to maintain and develop harmonious relationships with nature are perhaps the most significant aspect of their world views. Aboriginal peoples use her gifts sparingly and with regard for the needs of all other beings. Those beings who sacrifice their

lives so that humans can survive are thanked and given gifts in order to continue helping humans in a future time of need. Because of the interrelatedness of all beings, the circle represents Aboriginal peoples' deepest understanding of the natural world. The circle portrays the cycle of life, death, and rebirth as well as the interrelatedness of all beings. These and other themes that are pertinent to adult education will be analysed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Endnotes

[1]A year or two after my first participation in an "Inipi", an "Initi" for women was built on the west side of the fire. Although they are sometimes co-participants in the same "Inipi", men and women frequently show respect for one another's spiritual territory by holding separate ceremonies. In part, this is due to the importance a number of Sioux place on personal modesty. Many men and women feel more comfortable praying apart and find it easier to form significant relationships with those of their own gender. The Spiritual Advisor often welcomes the participants in a male only "Inipi" with words like: "Ho! It is good for the brothers to be together again once more."

4. Aboriginal World Views and Their Implications for the Education of Aboriginal Adults

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the implications Aboriginal world views have for the education of Aboriginal adults. The premise underlying it is that the world views of Aboriginal adults form the most appropriate basis for their education because they enhance the growth of both their cultures and their personal identities. Of the fundamental assumptions or deep structures which together comprise world views, two significant themes emerged from my conversations with the research participants. These are harmonious relationships and spirituality. The focus of this chapter is to explore some of the implications of these themes for the education of Aboriginal adults.

The chapter includes suggestions regarding Aboriginal adult education that grow out of the stories and knowledge expressed by the participants. These suggestions are partial and provisional, for qualitative research of a similar kind with other Aboriginal participants might yield different results. Ethnography, like other kinds of

qualitative research, considers knowledge to be socially constructed, the result of interaction among people in which reality is negotiated and interpreted (Keeves, 1988; Husen, 1988). For Aboriginal people, however, socially constructed knowledge also flows from their interaction with nature and is rooted in that relationship (Neihardt, 1932; Brown, 1953; Adams, 1990; McGaa, 1990). As a result, while such knowledge is subjective, partial, and in flux it also succeeds in apprehending objective reality in a variety of ways. In any case, my suggestions regarding Aboriginal adult education found in this chapter may be only partially applicable to other contexts.

The two main themes which emerged from my research and form the basis of my suggestions for the education of Aboriginal adults are harmonious relationships and spirituality. They complement and overlap with one another considerably. Harmonious relationships are of two kinds: those which connect human beings to nature and those which bind human beings together to form community. Both are important to the education of Aboriginal adults because they inform individual human beings of the interdependence of all aspects of the world. Because of that interdependence, people must respect and cooperate with the human and non-human aspects of the world so that all can flourish. The main presupposition here is that all human and non-human

beings are conscious, rational entities who possess both physical and spiritual gifts. Nature and all beings and entities within her are sacred and must be respected by human beings, who can form closer links with the spiritual aspects of nature through prayer and meditation and by attuning themselves to natural processes. Neither the theme of harmonious relationships nor the theme of spirituality can be overlooked in a balanced approach to Aboriginal adult education.

The Dakota expression, "Mitakuye Oyas'in" ("We are all related"), expresses a distinctive understanding of their relationships to the other human and non-human residents of the world. It signifies the Dakota belief that each person is linked by physical interdependence and spiritual kinship to all beings. During the annual Sundance ceremony, the Dakota people gather to give thanks for nature's gifts and to pray for their recurrence. This ceremony requires the active and harmonious participation of large numbers of people, possessing a common, spiritual focus. Through the Sundance, the Dakota maintain harmonious relationships with all beings by reaffirming their spiritual kinship with both human and non-human entities. The recognition that all things are related is not limited to the Dakota, but is shared by other Aboriginal peoples like the Cree, Ojibwe, Beaver, Saulteaux, and Kwakiutl. The notion of being in

relationship with all entities is central to the world views of many Aboriginal peoples and is expressed in this research by the themes of harmonious relationships and spirituality.

Although these two themes need to be included in a balanced approach to Aboriginal adult education, they are not limited to specific kinds of programs for Aboriginal adults. While they could certainly form the basis of programs in forestry education, literature appreciation, or language instruction, they could equally find expression in science education, as well as moral and spiritual education. Such an approach means that adult students develop an understanding of the world in accordance with Aboriginal world views. Moreover, these themes may also have some relevance to the education of Aboriginal children as no sharp distinction exists in Aboriginal communities between the education of different age groups. Similarly, these themes may have relevance to the education of non-Aboriginal Canadians, for harmonious relationships with nature are now being emphasized by non-Aboriginal educators in ways that are clearly influenced by Aboriginal spirituality.

The principal themes of harmonious relationships and spirituality emerged from my transcribed conversations with the Aboriginal participants in this research and are key aspects of their world views. In this chapter, I discus these themes and their implications for the education of

Aboriginal adults, ensuring that the participants' responses remain in the forefront of my discussion. I end with a brief conclusion to the whole thesis.

4.2 Harmonious Relationships and Aboriginal Adult Education

Harmonious relationships with all entities are central to the world views of many Aboriginal peoples,and should form part of their education, including that of Aboriginal adults. In this context, learners and educators are partners in the same learning process, meaning that the learner/educator relationship is egalitarian rather than hierarchical. This is why in Aboriginal communities, persons who are given special roles, like educators, healers, and leaders, are not conferred with greater status or wealth. Their roles are a reflection of the additional responsibilities and obligations they must fulfill for the benefit of their people. One male participant in my research described the role of chiefs as being obliged to consider the needs of others in their communities before their own. This is also true of elders, who must consider others and exercise self-restraint because of the special position they occupy in Aboriginal societies. Healers are also expected to work for the benefit of their communities. They are not allowed to charge for their assistance, and

they are obligated to treat everyone in the community with equal respect and consideration.

For Aboriginal peoples, a harmonious relationship between educator and learner lies at the heart of the educational process. An educator's role is one of service in which s/he cares for his/her students by promoting their worth and dignity. The educator practices respect for others in daily interaction with learners, encouraging them to live in harmony with other human beings and nature. The purpose of this approach to education is to enable individuals and communities to experience the kind of growth in which they achieve a balance both with themselves and with all other aspects of life (Katz & St. Denis, 1981). All of this is in stark contrast to Euro-Canadian approaches to education which stress the importance of content and method in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. While adult education in Euro-Canadian contexts encourages dialogue or conversation between learners and educators, in a far more relaxed manner than happens in schools, it pays little attention to the need for human beings to develop harmonious relationships with nature. Only relatively recently have North American educators come to recognize the importance of balanced ecological relationships between human beings and nature (Orr, 1992). To this extent, they are learning from the world views of Aboriginal peoples.

The Aboriginal participants in this research recognize quite clearly that harmonious relationships between human beings and the rest of nature are desirable. According to one participant, without "plants, minerals, and animals" human beings could not survive. She stresses the need for human beings to learn to recognize their dependence on nature because non-human entities are more important to the continuation of life than human beings. Clearly, this understanding of the world, which tends to stress the interdependence of all beings, has significant implications for Aboriginal adult education. For example, Euro-Canadian forestry education programs have consistently viewed the woods as a resource to be harvested. By way of contrast, forestry programs which accord with the world views of Aboriginal adults consider the forest and all beings who reside there to be sacred entities whose needs must be balanced with those of humans. Again, this contrasts with the Western belief that human beings are separate from and superior to nature. Much of science education for Euro-Canadian adults is based on the premise that the constituent parts of matter must be separated and analysed in order to gain knowledge. The notion that human beings might be dependent on nature is alien to such an approach.

Recognizing that the strength of the community depends on all people maintaining harmonious relationships removes

the artificial and sometimes destructive barriers between individuals, communities, and educational organizations that so often characterize the Euro-Canadian educational experience. Euro-Canadian educators and educational institutions are frequently defined by their role as disseminators of skills and knowledge. As such, they often become the sole arbiters of the learning process without reference to the needs and aspirations of the larger community to which they and the learners belong. Educators and educational organizations who act in this way quickly become separated from the communities and learners they are intended to serve. Acknowledging the value of harmony between people means, however, that educators and organizations seek to become part of the Aboriginal communities they serve (Hampton, 1993; Carney, 1982). They do so by maintaining a continuous dialogue with leaders, elders, students, and other community members so that they can respond to community needs and aspirations (Pease-Windy Boy, 1990). Many educational organizations in Aboriginal communities are now controlled by a board of directors composed of community members. Similarly, program advisory committees composed of elders, community members, and learners are often struck to provide guidance and support to individual programs.

A number of the quotations from the participants in chapter three, illustrate the commonly held belief among Aboriginal peoples that a person's identity and existence are fully dependent on membership in a human community. As such, all individuals are encouraged to live in harmony with others. Aboriginal people do not exist in the vacuum of Euro-Canadian conceptions of individuality in which humans are considered to be isolated atoms, responsible for their own sustenance and well being. Aboriginal people celebrate the linkages between themselves and others. Individual characteristics are respected and enhanced within the context of a group identity which places community needs before individual requirements.

4.3 Spirituality and Aboriginal Adult Education

In order for the education of Aboriginal adults to be compatible with the theme of spirituality found in their world views, plants, minerals, streams, lakes, and animals are to be regarded as full persons who possess volition, free will, and spiritual characteristics. Considering non-humans as spiritual beings and full persons means that methods of investigation that might injure or kill a plant or animal are avoided. Educators and learners are therefore obligated to consider prayerfully the likely impact of any investigation before it begins. Human and non-human

entities are sacred because they spring from the same source. As one woman remarked:

> We're all equal in terms of being sacred beings because we're all created the same way. Rocks, plants, animals, they're all sacred beings because they're all created from the same source.

The equality between human beings and nature stems from their shared spiritual origin in the rhythmic balance of the universe. This provides a grounding for ways of knowing the natural world that are far less harmful than those of Western science.

In describing the ways humans should conduct themselves toward nature, one female participant remarked that she used, "to pick medicines for my Grandmothers, the herbs and stuff like that you know, we were always taught to leave a gift. Because sometimes we literally had to kill a plant in order to take it." Moreover she learned, "to offer prayers of thankfulness and forgiveness to that plant because that plant had a life and we were killing it in order to survive ourselves. And that's how Native people view the environment." In order for approaches to the education of Aboriginal adults to be compatible with this aspect of their world views, unobtrusive methods of investigation which do little or no damage to nature, are required. Such observation in a natural setting is one way in which knowledge about a plant or animal can be gained by adult learners. Passive observation recognizes the spiritual

kinship that exists between human beings and nature as well as among non-human entities themselves. This method of learning protects that kinship because the relationship between humans and their non-human cousins is left largely undisturbed. The adult learner simply chooses a suitable location and slowly allows herself to become part of her surroundings. Sitting quietly and without motion, she is then able to observe and experience her surroundings with all her senses. One fall, I learned what a hard worker the shrew can be as I sat by a swamp during a hunting trip. Several times, the shrew scurried back and forth over my boots as it travelled to and from its food cache. The dead leaves on the ground rustled as the shrew busily prepared for the coming winter. Despite all its activity, I found that this shrew was very cautious. It frequently stopped its work, apparently listening and looking for any of the animals that normally prey on it.

Opportunities for experiencing growth through enhanced spiritual relationships with nature are clearly an important aspect of Aboriginal adult education. This can occur at formal occasions like pipe ceremonies, sweatlodges, or learning circles. Smudging and participation in a pipe ceremony, for example, are spiritually cleansing and allow the leaner the opportunity in a humble and receptive state of mind. They also offer a brief moment of contemplation

and the opportunity to strengthen resolve for the rigours of learning ahead. Learning becomes a spiritual activity because the participants have humbled themselves in order to heighten awareness of the positive influences that flow from others. Learning in this sense is not solely concerned with the acquisition of specific skills or mastery of a particular subject. Spiritually inspired learning enables the student to perceive the interconnectedness of all things and beings. It also means that students use the new found insights and knowledge to strengthen the kinship that exists among all entities who inhabit the earth (Hampton, 1993; Katz & St. Denis, 1991).

Stacking small, irregularly shaped pieces of rock on top of one another to form miniature statues is another way that Aboriginal adults form a spiritual connection to non-human beings. Such an activity is valuable because it requires high degrees of patience and concentration. The learner also develops some experiential knowledge of physics, a greater awareness of spatial orientation, and better developed motor skills. More importantly, however, this activity becomes a type of meditation or prayer as the learner seeks to discover the ways in which the rocks fit together. The learner's entire being is focussed on determining the heart of the rocks' relationship to one another and him/herself. S/he must ignore all distractions

and enter into a form of spiritual communication with these entities so that s/he will gain the knowledge necessary to complete the task. Aboriginal elders have long recognized the value of allowing the natural world to impart wisdom to human beings (Spiritual Advisor, Fieldnotes, February 23, 1994).

Education consistent with the spiritual aspect of Aboriginal world views considers the likely impact upon nature of any investigation. Educators and learners first need to consider whether such experimentation is respectful of all life and of benefit to non-human beings. In particular, it is important to consider how such an inquiry strengthens and maintains the natural harmony that exists among all beings (Project Start, Interview #2). To be consonant with Aboriginal world views, methods of investigation which injure or kill a plant or animal can only be employed sparingly. Educators and learners consider the sacredness of that being's life and the possible benefits of its sacrifice to humans and other non-human beings. Performing experiments to determine which vegetables grow best together is one example of how less intrusive methods of investigation can benefit both human and non-human beings. Although the circumstances of plants may be altered, such experiments are by no means destructive and may result in their becoming stronger and healthier. Such a

union may also benefit other plants or beings like insects and worms, as well as humans who benefit through increased yields from these vegetables. This approach is in contrast to the kind of scientific experimentation which seeks to reveal the genetic building blocks of plants and animals so as to generate higher yields or aesthetically pleasing products. Experiments which manipulate the genetic structure of tomatoes so that humans can enjoy a larger, redder fruit with a longer shelf life are incompatible with Aboriginal world views regarding nature. They do not respect the sacredness of life because they drastically alter the circumstances under which the lives of tomatoes occur for the sole benefit of human beings.

The importance of spirituality to the process of gaining knowledge cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, the spiritual purpose of all education is that it be used for the good of all beings. Just as the knowledge contained in Black Elk's vision (Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks, 1932) was intended to assist his people at a time of great political, social, and economic change, Aboriginal people consider knowledge to have an essentially social purpose. Speaking of this purpose, one woman described a healer's training in this way:

> Same way, umm, your doctors in today's society would get trained, right? You go to university and stuff like this. Well our medicine men had to go through the same thing. Babies when they

> were born were identified as having certain gifts already and those gifts and those gifts had to be developed.....And those abilities that people have in the Native world are not to be sold, they're not commodities, they were given to each spirit as it entered the physical world in order to achieve their purpose and to function and attain that purpose. So you could not charge for it; it wasn't for material gain.

According to this participant, knowledge is a spiritual gift which the possessor is obligated to use for the good of all people. The unique blend of talents and abilities that are bestowed on each individual are meant to be of service to those around them. Taking responsibility for the welfare of others means that harmonious relationships among community members are developed and maintained. Aboriginal peoples understand that knowledge has to be put to an active purpose in the everyday life of the community. In contrast to the beliefs of many Euro-Canadians, Aboriginal peoples do not consider that knowledge is to be acquired, stored, or employed to fulfill the selfish purposes of the possessor. In the context of Aboriginal adult education, this means that the primary purpose of learning should be to fulfill community needs rather than individual wants. For example, communities such as Tl'azt'en Nations have co-sponsored programs to train daycare workers so that the entire community can have access to affordable and professional childcare services. The purpose of adult education based on Aboriginal world views is to be of service to the community.

4.4 Conclusion

Aboriginal world views are the assumptions or presuppositions which form the underpinnings of Aboriginal cultures and knowledge. Aboriginal world views embody the understanding of Aboriginal peoples and are reflected in their languages as well as in their art, dance, spirituality, and their relationships both with nature or human beings. In order to understand the specific features of Aboriginal world views, I have considered the words of Aboriginal research participants and supplemented their understandings with the works of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors. Two themes common to many Aboriginal world views emerged from the analysis of the transcribed interviews. The first theme, Harmonious Relationships, describes the Aboriginal belief that all human and non-human entities are connected by bonds of kinship to each other. In recognizing these bonds of kinship, Aboriginal peoples feel obligated to live in harmony with non-human beings because of their dependence on them. The second theme, Spirituality, is evident in the widely held notion that all entities have spiritual capabilities. Rocks, trees, streams, and animals all have spiritual dimensions and are capable of action. As such they must be treated with caution and respect, for the spiritual aspects of nature can be of great

assistance to human beings as they attempt to lead balanced and wholesome lives.

Aboriginal world views have profound implications for the education of Aboriginal adults. In keeping with the theme of Harmonious Relationships, the role of educators in Aboriginal communities is one of service. It is socially oriented, for it strives to fulfill the aspirations of the entire community rather than the selfish wants of the individual. Developing harmonious relationships means that educators maintain an open, equal, and continuous dialogue with the people they serve in order to remain responsive to community needs. The focus of Aboriginal adult education is primarily one of relationship and not mere mastery of skill or content. Moreover, knowledge is acquired so that it can be used to assist others. Acting in accord with the themes of harmonious relationships and spirituality, educators recognize their kinship with both humans and non-humans. They treat both groups with care and respect so that learners may follow their example. One way that this is accomplished is through unobtrusive methods of investigation which leave the relationships between human and non-human largely undisturbed. Passive observation, in which knowledge is gained without upsetting the natural balance existing among all entities, is one such method.

A truly educated person in the Aboriginal sense is one who recognizes the spiritual interconnectedness of all beings and acts to affirm and strengthen it. Just before the start of one "Inipi", I remember doubting that there existed any spiritual dimensions, Aboriginal or Christian, in the universe at all. Out of respect to the others and their spiritual undertaking, I did not mention my doubts. Once I had found my space inside the "Initi", the sweatlodge leader addressed my doubts. He said that although we might not believe in the existence or power of the spirits, we should always treat spiritual things and ceremonies with respect because all were related. His statement reassured me because it demonstrated that what I was feeling had been experienced by others before me. On a deeper level, this recognition of the doubts many people experience confirmed the spiritual kinship which binds all entities in the universe together. After understanding this, my doubts abated, and I was able to participate in the ceremony with good thoughts and feelings. By this simple statement, the sweatlodge leader reaffirmed my relatedness to everyone within the "Initi" and, by extension, the rest of the universe. The knowledge that I gained flowed from the sweatlodge leader's understanding of the unity of all creation. Knowledge, in this sense, is a spiritual gift

which flows from a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of all things.

APPENDIX A

Notes on Research Methodology

The following describes the methods by which I obtained and analysed knowledge from the participants in this research.

With the exception of the follow-up interviews, all conversations were recorded on audio tape. As a result of my inexperience at sound recording, some of the dialogue in each interview was lost. Other information gathered during this research was stored on flip charts and in my fieldnotes. All records of our conversations were filed according to group (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). For example, all materials arising from my second interview with the students of Project Refocus were placed in a file with the group title: Project Refocus Interview #2. When the interviews were completed, I transcribed the audio cassettes into a written text. Copies of the transcribed text were forwarded to the other participants, so that they could examine them for the purpose of deciding if any portions of the text should be explained in greater detail or deleted from the research.

Highlighter pens of different colours were used to code the transcribed text into the two themes of spirituality and harmonious relationships. A blue highlighter pen was used

to indicate passages which related to the theme of spirituality; a green one was used to indicate passages related to harmonious relationships. Quite often passages of transcribed text relate to both themes. In this case, the colour of the principal theme highlights the print while a box is drawn around the passage in the colour representing the secondary theme. In the file, Native Friendship Centre Interview #1, a passage describes and analyses the pipe ceremony, a Lakota spiritual rite. The print is highlighted in blue because the principal theme of the passage is spirituality, but a green box is drawn around the passage to indicate harmony with nature.

This method of textual analysis is an adaptation of a similar method found in Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and Lofland and Lofland (1984) who suggest that transcribed text should be coded into themes. Coded portions of the text relating to the themes are then physically removed from the larger text and filed accordingly (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Lofland & Lofland, 1984). In my adaptation of their method, the coded portions of the text remain in the larger text thereby preserving the context in which they occur.

APPENDIX B

File List

Transcribed Interview	Filename	Date
Native Friendship Centre	NFC 1	June 1992
Project Refocus Interview #1	PR #1	June 1992
Project Refocus Interview #2	PR #2	June 1992
Start Program Interview #1	START #1	June 1992
Start Program Interview #2	START #2	June 1992
Spiritual Advisor	SA	June 1992

Follow-up Interview	Date
Former Director Start Program	February 12, 1994
Spiritual Advisor	February 23, 1994
Spiritual Advisor	February 24, 1995
Spiritual Advisor	March 28, 1995

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH

Consent To Take Part In A Research Project Investigating The Basis Of An English Curriculum For Aboriginal Adults

The aims and methods of this project have been explained to me and I wish to take part in it. My role in the project will be to take part in small group discussions in which we shall explore the lived explore the lived experience and world view of the Aboriginal people of the Prince George area. We shall then decide how such experiences and world view can form the basis of an English curriculum which meets the needs of Aboriginal adults in the Prince George area.

I am taking part in this rsearch on a voluntary basis, and have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. I understand that any information that I shall give to the researcher during the group interviews will be treated as confidential. In addition, my name will not be used in any material arising from this research, and all written or taped data will be destroyed once the thesis is complete.

Questions about the research can be answered by contacting the researcher, Peter Martin at 563-0022 in Prince George or (306) 664-2712 in Saskatoon. For any further information please contact the researcher's supervisor, Howard Woodhouse at (306) 966-7522.

_____ _____

Participant Date

_____ _____

Researcher Date

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